

Interview with A. Lincoln Gordon

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR A. LINCOLN GORDON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is September 30, 1987. I'm interviewing Ambassador Lincoln Gordon for the Association of Diplomatic Studies and the Foreign Service History Center of George Washington University. The interview is taking place at Ambassador Gordon's office in the Brookings Institution in Washington. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. The Association of Diplomatic Studies has instituted a series of oral histories of former senior officers of State Department with attention particularly on those who served as Ambassadors. The purpose of these interviews is to capture for active duty diplomats studying at the Foreign Service Institute and for scholars in the field of diplomacy the experiences and perceptions of those who served the United States in the field of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Gordon has had a long and distinguished career in public and private life. He graduated summa cum laude from Harvard in 1933, was a Rhodes scholar, taught at Harvard and then held a variety of positions in the United States Government, specially as an economic expert dealing with the Marshall Plan and NATO in Europe in the 1940s and "50s. He was appointed to be American Ambassador to Brazil in 1961 by President Kennedy. He held that position until 1966 when he became Assistant Secretary for InterAmerican Affairs in the State Department. He left that position in 1967. The interview today will concentrate on the period Ambassador Gordon was Chief of Mission at our Embassy in Brazil.

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Q: Mr. Ambassador I would like to ask you to comment before we get going on the actual interview. There have been several books and articles written concerning your time in Brazil which was a time of great crisis and interest to the United States. Which ones would you recommend and not recommend that you can think of now or authors for those who wish to go into more details in this period.

GORDON: I would recommend Thomas Skidmore's "Politics in Brazil", covering the period up until 1964. I have some differences of opinion with some of what he says about my role and the role of the United States government but it's basically a good study. He's about to follow it up with work to be published early in 1988 entitled "The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-85." Thomas E. Skidmore of the University of Wisconsin. There is a short book by Phyllis R. Parker published by the University of Texas Press in 1979 called, "Brazil and the Quiet Intervention 1964," that deals specifically with the circumstances surrounding the overthrowing of the Goulart presidency and the assumption of power by the military in March and April of 1964. She had a long interview with me and she gave me a chance to review her manuscript. Again, while I have differences with certain passages, I think it's basically a good study.

Q: Do you know whether the interview has been transcribed and deposited anywhere or does she have it?

GORDON: I assume she has it. I do not myself know of there being a transcription. I'm not sure there was a transcription, I think she was just taking notes. It was a good while ago but I don't remember there being a tape recorder. Ronald Schneider's book published in 1971 by the Columbia University Press called "The Political System in Brazil 1964-70" is one of the standard works by a very well informed scholar, so I would certainly recommend that. There are a couple of others that I've heard of but have not read myself, so I can not comment. One is Joseph A. Page's called "A Revolution that Never Was - Northeast Brazil 1955 to 1964," published in 1972. That, as I understand, deals particularly with the problems of land reform in the northeast and the role of SUDENE, the special

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regional development agency and the rather peculiar politics of the governor of the state of Pernambuco with whom I had an interesting run-in about 1963. He's back in Brazil now — Miguel Arraes — but quite changed in philosophy. And then there is a book which I have not read and I simply don't know the quality - Joao Quartim's "Dictatorship and Army Struggle in Brazil," published in 1971.

Q: And there is another author with whom you had some correspondence with whom I take you do not. . .

GORDON: There is a book which I would strongly recommend against. A book which pretends to be scholarly was prepared as a Ph.D. thesis at the American University, but in my view is a highly doctrinaire, opinionated, and unsound book which among other things has a number of gross misstatements of fact. It is by Jan K. Black, called "The United States Penetration in Brazil," published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Q: Turning to the subject at hand: You were basically an economic Europeanist, working on the Marshall Plan in Europe. How did you come to move towards Brazil?

GORDON: In 1955 I returned to Harvard from the post of Minister of Economic Affairs in our embassy in London and Director of what was left of the Marshall Plan Mission, which was terminated on June 30, 1955. All of the country missions set up for the Marshall Plan ended on that day. I returned to the Harvard Business School to take charge of a small group working on International Business and Economic Relations. The next year there was set up at Harvard a new Center for International Affairs. I was the first candidate for its direction. I refused the offer for that position and recommended strongly that Robert R. Bowie, an old friend, be put in it. He was appointed, but I was a member of the inner faculty core group which helped to develop that center. Together with Edward Mason, a very distinguished economist, still living although no longer well, the dean of American development economists, he and I developed a program for studies on the relationship between Government and the private sector (private sector meaning either domestic or

Library of Congress

foreign) in the development of less developed countries. In those days we rather candidly called them backward countries. The Ford Foundation was persuaded to put several hundred thousand dollars into it. I had become interested in Brazil almost by accident. While in England in the earlier '50s, I had become interested in economic development generally. This was partly because the British had launched a program, the so-called Colombo plan, for technical and economic assistance to South and Southeast Asia, a region which of course was becoming free of colonial rule. I tried to persuade the US Government to participate on the donor side along with the British, and I did get support from Harold Stassen for that purpose. But George Humphrey was then Secretary of the Treasury and would have nothing to do with it. So that particular idea evaporated. But I went back to Harvard to develop a program primarily for business students, I had a sufficient interest in the development side that in my new course the first half was devoted to general international economic problems and relations with advanced countries (what today we call developed countries) while the second half was devoted entirely to economic relations, including business and more general governmental relations with developing countries. I happened to acquire in 1955, at the beginning of this appointment, a research assistant of British nationality, but Peruvian birth. His father had been chief engineer of a Shell Oil refinery in Lima, Peru, so he grew up completely bilingual. He had then gone to the University of Toronto and the Harvard Business School. He was working in Latin America for W. R. Grace but he had written our dean saying he would like to come back into academic life. He was married and needed a salary, so he came back as my research assistant. He was a very intelligent man who knew a great deal about Latin American history, culture, politics and economics, as well, of course, as business problems. He got me interested in Latin America. The more I learned about it the more I became persuaded that although there was very little planning and a great deal of disorder in the developmental process, there was also a great deal of motion. There was, in fact, a lot of development taking place — political, social, and economic — so this subject clearly deserved attention. Brazil is by far the largest country in Latin America, and it happened also to be having a developmental boom. At this period, Juscelino Kubitschek

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was the president. He had been elected in 1955 on a platform of developmentalism. One of his slogans was “fifty years in five”; meaning that in his five-year term he was going to promote fifty years worth of development. In fact he was doing a great deal — building highways, enlarging the electrical power supply, bringing in an automobile industry — this was the beginning of the Brazilian automobile industry — ship- building, enlarging iron and steel capacity, and generally promoting a diversified kind of industrialization. So this intrigued me, and I began reading what I could find about Brazil in English. When Edward Mason and I persuaded the Ford Foundation to subsidize this large research program, I decided to carve out for myself a specific project on Brazil. It was focused on relations between government and private enterprise — the governmental and the private sectors. In 1959 I went to Brazil for almost our entire summer to try to see whether the project was feasible, and if so to recruit some Brazilian collaborators (I use “collaborator” in an entirely good sense, not in the French war time sense of course).

The Ford Foundation happened that summer to be sending down its first exploratory team to see what it might do in South America, where they had done nothing up to that time. The team was limited to three countries: Chile, Brazil and Argentina. It spent only one week in Chile, then about five or six weeks in Brazil, and a couple of weeks at the end in Argentina. They asked me to join them, since I happened to know the chap in charge. That was very useful because, coming as Ford Foundation advisors, all sorts of doors were opened to us. We visited seven major cities in Brazil, getting a good sense of regional differences, and we met with all kinds of people. A foreign service officer was assigned to us, a very bright young diplomat. We met officials at the state level, as well as the federal. We met people experimenting with new institutions in primary education and development of agricultural extension services. We also met people studying general economic analysis and trying to improve the quality of economic teaching in Brazil which had been very low, and very limited. Others were working on improved training in engineering. So we met academic people, governmental people, and in Sao Paulo business people of various

Library of Congress

kinds American and Brazilian alike. I became persuaded that Brazil was an extraordinarily interesting country in which a great deal of development was going on.

I had the good fortune of being introduced to Roberto Campos, who later became a very distinguished planning minister for Brazil and is now a Senator from Mato Grosso. He also was ambassador in the United States from 1961 to 1964, in effect my opposite number in Washington. He is a very distinguished diplomat and also a leading Brazilian economist. In 1959, Campos had just been fired by Kubitschek from the presidency of the National Bank for Economic Development and he had set up a small consulting firm called Consultec which relied for staffing on the spare time for moonlighting time of professional diplomats. In those days Brazilian diplomats, when abroad, were paid reasonable salaries comparable to diplomats in other countries. But when they were at home they could only be paid on the same scale as Brazilian domestic civil servants. That, of course, was a very low wage which created a lot of tension. They solved that problem by limiting the working time at the Foreign Office to six hours per day and encouraging the diplomats to take on moonlighting jobs in the afternoon, provided there was no conflict of interest. Consultec was staffed by the best of the Brazilian diplomats with special economic training. They had another wise policy which Campos himself had benefited from. Since Brazilian universities lacked good training at the graduate level, particularly in economic affairs, young recruits into the diplomatic service were often sent early in their careers either to France or Britain or the United States and given quite a lot of leeway in their working time so they could take courses at a university. In Campos's case, he was a vice consul in Los Angeles and went to UCLA for his training. That is where he got his formal training as an economist.

I made a contract on behalf of Harvard with Consultec, and started working on the research project. I came back in the summer of 1960 for a couple of months, bringing my wife down to see something of this fascinating country. I had no notion at the time that I might ever be back in an official capacity. So that was how I got interested in Brazil.

Library of Congress

How I got the appointment as Ambassador I can summarize very quickly. After John Kennedy was elected President and before he took office he appointed task forces to advise him on all aspects of policy, both domestic and foreign. One was a task force on policy toward Latin America. It was chaired by Adolf Berle, who had been Assistant Secretary of State just after World War II (for Latin America). He had also been Ambassador in Brazil in the last year or so of the war. He was a professor of law at Columbia and maintained very active interest in Latin American affairs. He spoke Portuguese, Spanish and French and traveled frequently in the region. A few weeks after the 1960 election I got a telephone call from him in Boston. He had very brusque mannerisms. We had met at several conferences on Latin American matters, but I didn't know him at all well. He first made sure that I was on the other end of the phone and then asked: "Has Sorensen called you?" I replied: "Sorensen, no; who is he?" He said: "I mean Ted Sorensen, the President-elect's right hand man." I said: "What about?" He said: "It will be in the newspapers tomorrow, but the President-elect has designated me the chairman of his task force on Latin America. We need an economist and you're it." I said: "Well, Dr. Berle that's very surprising and interesting news because I have only been studying Latin America for a few years. I have been working on a project in Brazil and by now I know a lot about Brazil. I also know something about the neighboring larger countries in South America, but nothing about Central America and the Caribbean. (I had never even been to Mexico at the time.) I can name you easily half a dozen American economists who have specialized in Latin America all their careers and are much better qualified than I am." He said: "No, no, you're the man we want. We have been through all that." It wasn't a very responsibility. The group was going to meet a few Friday afternoons in New York at intervals of a couple of weeks, and then end up with a big weekend of intensive work putting together a report. Meanwhile we would each be drafting chapters, my own being the economic chapter. That is where the substance of the Alliance for Progress was first put into an official US document, based on ideas which had been discussed for some years in Latin American and North American circles. The name "Alliance for Progress" had been developed by Dick Goodwin, one of the President's speech writers and a member of

Library of Congress

our task force, for use in a Kennedy campaign speech, I think in Orlando, Florida, which was never delivered. He in turn had sought advice from journalists in Washington who knew Latin America history. The coiner the Director of Radio Marti, the special Voice of America radio service directed toward Cuba.

Betancourt at a twenty-fifth anniversary conference in 1986 explained why it was called the Alliance for Progress instead of Alliance for Development. He and his friends knew that President Kennedy could not pronounce foreign words. The word for development in Spanish is “desarrollo” which was clearly beyond his capacity, while “progreso” he could probably pronounce. So that is how great decisions are made, and “Alliance for Progress” became the name. Goodwin was totally ignorant of Spanish, and not aware that in Spanish you must use the definite article, making it “Alianza para el Progreso” or in Portuguese “Aliança para o Progresso”. He wanted to have a direct transliteration of “Alliance for Progress”. In Kennedy's speech on March 13, 1961, which launched the program, the definite article was omitted — much to the amusement of all of the Spanish-speaking people around.

The basic ideas in the Alliance for Progress were Latin American. They had been in circulation and discussion in inter-American economic meetings for many years. And the outgoing Republican administration, under the leadership of Douglas Dillon as Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, had moved in that direction. They had agreed to set up the Inter-American Development Bank and Dillon had represented the United States at a quite important inter-American meeting in Bogota, in 1960, in which a program for social development was adopted. The United States was pledged to support it to the tune of five hundred million dollars. Funds were not appropriated in time for the outgoing administration to use, so one of the first things the incoming administration had to do was and to ask Congress for those funds. Dillon, of course, turned up again in the new administration, now as Secretary of the Treasury. He was, in a sense, a personal symbol of bipartisanship in the program of assistance for Latin America.

Library of Congress

Drafting the chapter for the task force developed in my mind a sense of personal interest at stake in the Alliance for Progress. Then as appointments were made to the administration, it turned out that I was personally acquainted with almost all of them. Dean Rusk I had worked with during the Marshall Plan days; he had also tried to persuade me to go to the Rockefeller Foundation when he was president there. I didn't want to move to New York so I turned him down, but only after a very cordial discussion. McNamara I had known because he had close connections with the Harvard Business School. George Ball had been involved in all kinds of European matters. He and I had developed a friendly standing difference about the European Common Market — “little Europe of six countries”. I supported looser integration in a wider Europe, while he was a supporter of little Europe and was devoted to Jean Monnet.

I was certain that I would be asked to take some job in the new administration, without knowing what. I made up my mind that there were only two jobs in Washington that I would accept, although I didn't want to go back to Washington full-time in any case. This may sound rather vain, but the first of the two was Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, which George Ball was offered and did accept. He later became Political Under Secretary, but he started as Economic Under Secretary. The other job was that of National Security Adviser, which went to McGeorge Bundy. At that time, it was much less prominent than it became later, first under Bundy and later under Kissinger and Rostow and Brzezinski. (Whether it has been so distinguished lately is another question.) I was not offered either of those but I got a telephone call from Dean Rusk in early January, when he was already Secretary of State-designate. He asked me to see him in Washington and he offered the post of Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs. I thought that would be foolish for two reasons. First I didn't want to come to Washington full time job in any case. And apart from that, the incumbent was Edwin Martin, a very distinguished professional Foreign Service Officer, who had only been on the job for a year. He was not a political appointee, and I saw absolutely no reason for making a change merely because a new administration was taking office.

Library of Congress

Q: This was for Economic or. . .

GORDON: Economic affairs. Not for Latin America, that came later. So I said: "Well, Dean this is foolish. You know Edwin Martin is a very good manager. He has been in this job for less than a year. There is no point making changes just for the sake of making changes. In fact, they agreed to keep Edwin in the job. But I thought it also useful to have a counter offer in my pocket. I am not sure he even knew that I had been on the task force on Latin America, and had been responsible for the chapter that outlined the content of the Alliance for Progress. Years earlier, in 1947, I had worked with a small group in the State Department heading up the preparatory work on the Marshall Plan in order to make it into a serious operating program. I saw a similar need for the Alliance for Progress. The President-elect had already agreed to adopt the program and mention it in his inaugural address. There would be more about it in the State of the Union message, and later a special message devoted entirely to it. So I knew it was going to be part of Kennedy's program. I knew that it would be entirely different from the Marshall Plan, but there was a similar task of converting it from a gleam in the eye into an operating program. I thought I could be useful in that effort. I thought I could work out with Harvard a deal to work in Washington half-time, while keeping on with my teaching in the other half-time. That proposal was accepted by Rusk with alacrity. George Ball telephoned as soon as I got back to Cambridge. "Splendid," he said, "Your first task will be to defend before Otto Passman's subcommittee the five hundred million dollar appropriation that we need for the Act of Bogota.

Q: Otto Passman was a congressman or. . .

GORDON: He was a congressman from Louisiana who was chairman of the subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee which dealt with foreign aid. He had a dreadful reputation, which was entirely justified. He had a staff aide named Frank Merrill and the two of them had terrorized the presenters of all foreign aid programs, starting with Dick Bissell who presented the Marshall Plan annual appropriation requests year after

Library of Congress

year, as our foreign aid program changed its character, officials always had to defend the appropriation request before Otto Passman — a task regarded as going through a kind of purgatory. Passman had a way of going on and off the record. He would be quite friendly off the record and then suddenly go back on the record and ask what he thought were devastating questions. He was a terrible nitpicker, who thought his constituency wanted him to cut all aid programs. To the best of my knowledge, this five hundred million dollars for the Act of Bogota was the only aid request ever adopted intact by Passman's subcommittee and was done against Passman's will. We persuaded the majority of that subcommittee to vote Passman down. He tried all kinds of tricks. At one time — I was told by other members of the subcommittee — during an executive session he picked up the telephone and had his secretary call Dillon, who had made the initial presentation as Secretary of the Treasury. (After that, I spent an entire week testifying, several hours a day. The record is quite interesting. Passman then said, in the hearing of all of his committee members, “Mr. Secretary, on that matter that we were talking about and so on, I'm sure that I can secure the subcommittee's agreement. . .” Without saying what it was, he hung up and said to the subcommittee, “The Secretary is perfectly happy if we cut \$100,000,000 out of this. One of the other subcommittee members smelled a rat and got hold of Dillon right away. He learned that there had been no such commitment whatever. It was a fraud, and against that background we were able to persuade the majority of the subcommittee members to vote Passman down.

Then came the work on President Kennedy's March 13 speech. The words were produced by Dick Goodwin but the substance was supplied basically by me.

Q: This was the Alliance for Progress?

GORDON: Yes, March 13, 1961. Kennedy assembled in the East Room of the White House the whole Latin American diplomatic corps, many members of the House and the Senate, and some other friends of Latin America, from the business community and

Library of Congress

elsewhere. It was a group of several hundred and he made this launching speech for the . .

Q: How did the Alliance for Progress differ from the normal aid program?

GORDON: It was larger. It was supposed to be more systematic, and like the Marshall Plan it was supposed to have some kind of Latin American organization to oversee its functioning. It was a commitment in effect of a billion dollars a year for ten years which in those days seemed like quite a lot of money. In the previous period, except for the last couple of years of the Eisenhower administration the policy on aid to Latin American had been that private investment, on the one hand, and the Export-Import Bank, on the other, would take care of everything that was needed.

Q: Would you say, was this really a Democratic versus Republican outlook or just happenstance?

GORDON: To some extent it was a Democratic versus Republican outlook, although the Republican attitudes had changed. You may remember the background of that change was the near lynching of Vice-President Nixon twice: once in Peru and once in Venezuela, on what was supposed to be a goodwill trip.

Q: His car was attacked I think . .

GORDON: That's right, in Caracas. And after that President Eisenhower dispatched his younger brother Milton, who knew a great deal about Latin America, on an inquiry trip to see what was wrong. Milton reported back that inter-American relations were very sour indeed and were getting worse. Something had to be done about it. He recommended a much sharper distinction between the democratic and autocratic regimes. He invented this phrase: "A cool and correct hand shake for the dictators and an abrazo — a Latin embrace — for the democrats." Apart from that he saw a need for a much more affirmative approach to economic relationships. There were problems of the terms of trade: prices

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of Latin exports of raw materials and agricultural products had been depressed for a number of years so that their balances of payment were under a considerable strain. In addition, there was the whole question of access to the American market for Latin American exports, particularly if the Latins were going to diversify into industrial products as well as raw materials and agricultural products. There was also the question of needed capital for infrastructure, particularly roads, railways, ports, and electric power, but also for what was termed "social investment". I don't know the exact history of that term, but it really became prominent at the conference in Bogota in 1960. The notion was that Latin American countries needed a considerable amount of social reform. Historians have debated a good deal how far this was a simple reaction to Fidel Castro and what was happening in Cuba. Some of them claim that both the Act of Bogota and the Alliance for Progress were simply reactions to a fear that the Cuban-style revolution would spread. I don't think that's entirely correct. Certainly in winning public and Congressional support for the Alliance for Progress the concern about Cuba played an important part, by that time, Cuba was clearly a Communist leaning if not Communist controlled country. But the inspiration of the Act of Bogota and certainly Milton Eisenhower's trip took place before the maturing of the Cuban revolution. The trip probably took place before Castro came into power on January 1, 1959. I don't remember the exact time, but the trip certainly was not inspired by the Cuban concern. I believe that Dillon's position at Bogota and the agreement by the US to create the InterAmerican Development Bank, which the Latins had advocated for years, also antedated active concern about the Cuban revolution.

Q: It was more a policy that was developing because of growing concern about the state of Latin American countries?

GORDON: That's right. And the state of inter-American relations, the attitudes toward the United States in Latin America. During World War II, except for Argentina (which stayed nominally neutral, but was actually leaning toward the Axis side), there had been active cooperation on the part of Latin America. They helped with raw material supplies, with wild rubber of various types, and in the case of Brazil, militarily. Brazil sent troops, ships,

Library of Congress

and airplanes. A substantial contingent of troops fought under Mark Clark in the campaign running up the Italian peninsula.

Q: That was a tough campaign, wasn't it?

GORDON: That's right; a very difficult campaign. So that there was a reservoir of goodwill which had started in 1933 with FDR's so-called "Good Neighbor" policy — a renewed pledge of non-intervention by the United States. Good relations were further amplified during the war. But then, after the war, there was a terrible let-down because the prices of a lot of Latin American export products suddenly dropped. There simply was much less demand for them. The Latins had hoped that the United States would provide some kind of compensation for this, but we never did. The Organization of American States has an economic arm called the Inter-American Economic and Social Council which at least once a year, and often twice, would have meetings at the ministerial level. They included finance ministers, trade ministers, and sometimes foreign ministers. Repeatedly at those meetings the American representatives had been pressed to develop some new forms of economic collaboration in Latin America and repeatedly the Latins had been turned down, both by the Truman administration and by the Eisenhower administration. Then there was the contrast between John Foster Dulles pleas for Latin American political support, particularly against Communist expansion anywhere, and his refusal to do anything on the economic front. There was one dramatic meeting of foreign ministers in Caracas where the agenda had some kind of anti-Communist political items. Foster Dulles argued, persuaded, lobbied, and got them passed; he then took his plane back to Washington, leaving a more junior Under Secretary to handle economic matters and to say, "No". This was resented all over Latin America, as you can imagine, with some passion.

I had been learning a lot about that background in my work with the Ford Foundation and my own studies of Brazil. Then, in early 1961 I worked on the March 13 speech, proposing the Alliance for Progress. After the speech, I began working with a group of Latin American officials and a sizeable group of US officials headed by John Leddy who had been moved

Library of Congress

from State to Treasury by Dillon. When Dillon was Under Secretary of State in 1959-60, Leddy had been Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs, and when Dillon became Secretary of the Treasury in 1961, he asked Leddy to join him there as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs. Ed Martin was the counterpart on the State Department side. Those two and I, and various others, collaborated very closely in developing the detailed US proposals for the Alliance for Progress.

We were in active consultations with the key Latin American economic officials in multilateral institutions: Felipe Herrera, a Chilean who was President of the Inter-American Development Bank, Jorge Sol, a Salvadoran who was then Economic Under Secretary of the Organization of American States, and, in Chile, the celebrated Raoul Prebisch, an Argentinian who was the head of the U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America. Prebisch died only a year or so ago. He had been treated badly by American administrations over the years, they were suspicious of him. He had theories about how the terms of trade were always moving against developing countries and notions about trying to organize developing countries to work together to press for concessions from the richer countries. Indeed, the so-called “dependency theory” owes quite a lot to Prebisch. But he was a much more open-minded man than we had given him credit for. I remember one night at a meeting in Rio, in April, we were sitting together at the swimming pool at the Copacabana Palace Hotel. He almost had tears in his eyes. He said: “You know, these consultations that you got me into on the formation of the Alliance for Progress are the first time that any high-ranking American official like yourself — and I was of course merely a consultant to the State Department and the White House — has treated me as an equal.” Intellectually, he was an extraordinarily distinguished man; he had been Argentina's Finance Minister and was a highly regarded figure in Latin America. These kinds of rather stupid slights that we had engaged in were quite easy to reverse. Our earlier practice looked like the British in India.

Library of Congress

Q: Looking at our Foreign Service structure, weren't people in our Foreign Service calling these errors to anybody's attention?

GORDON: That's an interesting question. The Alliance for Progress ideas were welcomed by some of the Latinists in the Department, but others thought that the proponents were excessively enthused. One such case was Tom Mann, who had been Assistant Secretary in the last years of the Eisenhower administration, and was then Ambassador-designate to Mexico. He knew, as I did not know, that the Bay of Pigs was coming, and he wanted to get to Mexico before it happened; otherwise he would have been in a very difficult spot in Mexico City. But Tom was always skeptical about the Alliance. I believe he felt that it was just "the enthusiasm of a bunch of political newcomers that don't really know Latin America the way we do." If you'd worked mainly on Central America or Panama, or to a considerable extent Mexico, you had a lot of reason to be rather callous, to be hardened about corruption, the absence of any deep-rooted democratic cultural roots, and to be skeptical about the possibilities of rapid economic, political and social evolution of Latin American societies along the lines called for by the Alliance for Progress.

The Alliance had a very strong reformist element in it. That was another aspect which was different from previous programs; I should have mentioned it before. The aid was to be conditional, and the conditions were to include various types of reform, with emphasis on social reforms. Examples would include land reform; more attention to the masses whether rural or urban, looking toward a better distribution of income; wider employment opportunities, wider educational opportunities; and generally more social mobility. Those had been the central notions at the 1960 conference which produced the Act of Bogota. The idea was to promote peaceful social revolutions instead of violent class conflict and Cuban-type revolution.

So all of this was background to my appointment as Ambassador to Brazil. It happened that the first big inter-American high level meeting on economic affairs during the Kennedy administration was to be in Rio de Janeiro, in early April 1961. It was a meeting of

Library of Congress

the Governors of the new Inter-American Development Bank. The Governors are the Finance Ministers, as they are in the case of the World Bank. They don't meet very often; typically there is one meeting per year. The first annual meeting had been at the Bank's headquarters which is in Washington. The second annual meeting would naturally be in the largest Latin American country, namely Brazil. Because it was the first such meeting, the United States mounted a quite high level delegation. It was led by Secretary of the Treasury Dillon and it included Senator Fulbright and Senator Hickenlooper, the Chairman and ranking minority member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and their wives. Their counterparts from the House Foreign Affairs Committee were also in the group, and Mrs. Dillon was in the party. There were a variety of Assistant Secretaries. Of course John Leddy and Ed Martin, whom I mentioned before, and also Assistant Secretaries of Labor and Commerce. There was a substantial supporting staff. I had been asked to go along as a consultant on the development of the Alliance for Progress because at this meeting there would be opportunities to meet informally with all of the key economic officials from Latin America: Ministers of Finance, Central Bank governors — every important economic-type official. In all, there were hundreds of people attending. They included the Inter-American multilateral officials I named earlier.

In order to avoid a sleepless night, we flew one afternoon to the air base we still had in Puerto Rico, which has since been closed, and spent the night comfortably on the ground. Fairly early the next morning we boarded the plane for Rio. During that day, we were mostly flying over Brazil. Dillon had been told by someone that I was working on a research project on Brazil so he invited me into the forward cabin where the VIPs were — Senators and Congressmen and their wives, and a couple of Assistant Secretaries. I happened to know more about Brazilian geography and history than anyone else on the plane. Most of the time we were traveling over rain forest so there wasn't very much to see, but every once in a while there would be an interesting feature — a river or a town. I gave them a kind of Cook's tour lecture on Brazil's geography, politics, economics, current

Library of Congress

problems, and so on, which they apparently found quite interesting. We arrived in Rio end of the afternoon and were installed in our hotel.

The first appointment the next morning was a briefing by the Ambassador Jack Cabot, a very distinguished professional diplomat. I think it's fair to say that he was a diplomat of the old school which knew a great deal about politics and international law and relatively little about economics. Economics was left to economic attach#s, consuls, and commercial attach#s. Jack Cabot also unfortunately had a slight speech stammer. The briefing was very good on Brazilian politics and things of that kind but when it came to economic matters which this delegation was mainly interested in, he stumbled a good deal. He was unable to answer some of the questions and left a rather poor impression. A couple of days later there was a large party at the house of Walter Moreira Salles, a leading Brazilian banker who had been their Ambassador in Washington during the last years of the Eisenhower administration. I had come to know him because, working on my research project, I needed some materials from the Brazilian Embassy, and he kindly had me over for lunch a couple of times with some of his staff members. So we had formed a cordial personal relationship. His party was held in an elegant house — he is one of the leading bankers in the country and very wealthy — and all the top people from our delegation were there along with a number of leading Brazilians and so on. I had met many fraction of them during my research trips in 1959 and 1960, and this was noticed. On the way home, Dillon called me aside in the front cabin of the plane, and said: “Look, the Alliance for Progress is going to be the most important thing in our relations with Latin America for the next several years. The Alliance for Progress cannot succeed generally if it fails in Brazil. It might fail in some other smaller country and still be a success, but if it fails in Brazil which is a third of Latin America and half of South America, the most important country in the hemisphere, then it's an overall failure. I believe that we ought to have an ambassador there who understands what the Alliance for Progress is all about and who is capable of dealing with the economic issues. Jack Cabot is a very distinguished individual, he has been there for a couple of years and it would not be any insult if he were transferred to a

Library of Congress

post with less active economic work. If I were to recommend to President Kennedy that he appoint you as Ambassador, would you be interested?" Dick Goodwin, who was in the delegation, had murmured something a week or two earlier along these lines. I was intrigued, but didn't take it terribly seriously until Dillon made this very specific proposal. So I said that, subject to my wife's concurrence, I would indeed be interested. I told him I had turned down various jobs in Washington, but this one seemed to me much more interesting and a tremendous challenge — helping to put the Alliance for Progress into practical operation.

In May, the President invited me to see him in the White House and made the offer. I said I would be honored, and asked him how long he would want me to serve. He said: "How long would you take it for?" I said: "As you know since you've been on the Board of Overseers at Harvard, the longest leave that they will give you in peace time is two years." He said: "OKAY, that's all right." I said: "That surprises me because I remember in the first few months of your administration a lot of talk about how you only wanted people to accept appointments if they'd stay for the duration . . . and the duration was understood to be four full years, your first term." (We always assumed he would live and be re-elected.) He said: "I've long since abandoned that idea." A lot of people simply wouldn't come on that basis and he was perfectly willing to limit it to two years.

Q: What was your relationship with President Kennedy? Had you known him?

GORDON: I had not known him before, beyond having shaken his hand perhaps once at some Harvard affair. Unlike several Harvard professors, like Galbraith and Schlesinger and others, I had not known him personally. I had participated in the campaign only to the extent of writing a policy paper on international economic relations which was delivered to Archibald Cox at the Law School. (Later he became famous in connection with Watergate — the Saturday Night Massacre.) Archie Cox was coordinating policy papers on a variety of subjects and I simply fed that into him. I have no idea whether anyone read it or paid it any attention.

Library of Congress

Q: So you weren't part of the Kennedy entourage?

GORDON: Not in the slightest. In this work on the Alliance for Progress, of course, I did see him several times, particularly over the drafting of that March 13th speech. I had been invited to a couple of large White House dinners, but this invitation to become ambassador was the first private, personal conversation we ever had, the two of us being alone. So I was not in that sense a Kennedy man either politically or through Harvard connections.

Q: Did you have any trouble with your confirmation hearings going down to . . .

GORDON: Let me explain what happened because that's an important episode during which I got to know Kennedy quite a lot better, and also Adlai Stevenson. At the interview in May, we then talked about what the timing of my appointment. I said that it should not be made right away. I was going to be on the American delegation to the negotiating conference in August at Punta del Este, Uruguay, on the Alliance for Progress. It would be better if I were not associated with one particular country, but rather be generally interested in Latin America. Also, I had some chores to complete. My half-time commitment to Harvard had been rather starved and I really wanted to discharge a few more obligations there, including finishing one little study which was published by the Harvard Business School on United States investment in Brazil. (The rest of that project just went by the boards except for a few studies by my Brazilian collaborators which were published in Portuguese.) Kennedy agreed. He said : "That's fine. Let's wait until Punta del Este is over. Then I'll send your name to the Senate in the latter part of August and you go down to Brazil in September."

Unfortunately in those days, as now, leakages were common. In my case it probably came from somebody in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. In any case, by the very end of May, the same month, there was a story about my appointment in the New York Times. Word about this came to me in an interesting way. I had been invited by General Norstad — then the NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, to spend a

Library of Congress

week at SHAPE headquarters in Versailles. This was before De Gaulle kicked NATO out of France. I was to participate in the annual SHAPE conference, in which all the high brass from all the NATO countries are assembled at headquarters. The meetings were mostly about strategy and tactics and policy problems of NATO, but Norstad thought they also had an obligation to learn about wider issues. He became convinced that development of developing countries was an important global topic, so he had one morning devoted to a panel discussion of development by a German, a Frenchman, a Britisher and an American; I was the American panelist. In return my wife and I were given first-class travel to Paris and hotel room and a car and driver for a week. I thought that was a very good honorarium. We enjoyed it enormously.

On the eve of our departure from Cambridge for that trip, I got a telephone call from Marcilio Marques Moreira, then the Brazilian Ambassador's right hand man, who by coincidence is the present Brazilian Ambassador in Washington. He was then a sort of executive aide to Ambassador Walter Moreira Salles. He said: "Walter and I have heard some very exciting news. I hope it's true." I knew at once what he was talking about. I said: "My God! What have you heard?" "Well, you are to be named Ambassador in Rio." By then I knew Marcilio quite well, and I said "Look, Marcilio, there is no point in my denying it but it would be very embarrassing if it were published because President Kennedy and I have agreed that it should be announced only after Punta del Este." Then I asked how many people knew about it. He said: "I'm afraid a number of journalists know it. It's bound to appear in the press soon." I thanked him for alerting me. By then Tom Mann had left for Mexico and they hadn't filled the job of Assistant Secretary. The Acting Assistant Secretary was Wymberley Coerr, who was a professional Foreign Service Officer, who later became Ambassador to Ecuador. And, of course, I had to inform him immediately about these developments. I said: "Something awful has happened. The news of my appointment has leaked out. I don't know whether Jack Cabot has been informed yet, but for God's sake be sure he gets the news before he reads in the newspapers."

Library of Congress

Fortunately that was done. He was notified in time and then appointed ambassador to Poland. The whole thing, fortunately, was handled as decently as possible, in contrast to the experience of Ellis Briggs. Ellis Briggs had been Ambassador in Rio in the late 1950s and read in the newspapers one day that Clare Boothe Luce had been nominated to his job, without his having been notified at all. As a simple matter of humanity that kind of treatment of professional diplomats seems to me a terrible way to perform. Fortunately, in my case it was avoided, but only by the skin of the teeth since if I had left Cambridge, as I did the next day for Paris, Marcilio Moreira would never have been able to track me down and the story would have appeared before Cabot was notified. It did appear in the newspapers in Paris during the week we were there; the New York Times story was reproduced in the International Herald Tribune.

I'd no sooner gotten back to Cambridge, where I was going to spend the months of June and July working on Harvard duties, when a call came from Dick Goodwin who was then a Special Assistant to Kennedy at the White House. He said: "Have you unpacked your bags?" and I said: "My goodness! What mischief are you up to now?" He said: "You'll read in the papers tomorrow that the President has asked Adlai Stevenson to take a tour around the ten capitals of South America, to discuss with presidents and ministers there both the Cuban problem and the Alliance for Progress. We're sending Ellis Briggs who has now retired from the Foreign Service, as his diplomatic advisor, but we need an economic advisor. As nobody knows more about the Alliance for Progress than you, you ought to do it." It was to take eighteen days, visiting ten capitals, and of course cutting dreadfully into this time I thought I was going to use for Harvard. But I had never met Stevenson, although I had read a lot about him, and I had been a great admirer of his during the unsuccessful campaigns in the 1950's. I had read many of his speeches. I thought this proposal simply could not be turned down. We had a whirlwind trip; it was fascinating. On that trip and subsequently, I got to know Stevenson quite well. I came to have doubts as to what kind of president he would have made, but he was a wonderful human being.

Library of Congress

Q: Just on that side, what was it — the problem of indecision?

GORDON: Exactly . .

Q: This has always been the one question mark about this remarkable man . .

GORDON: Whoever coined the phrase that we had a choice between what seemed like a junior boy scout on one hand and a Hamlet on the other I thought had it exactly right. The indecisiveness was shown in all kinds of ways—big and small. There was a fascinating episode in Buenos Aires in which he simply could not make up his mind. Our Ambassador there at the time and I were trying to get him to come down one way or the other. That aspect was curious, but nevertheless I developed enormous respect and affection for him, his capacity to laugh at himself, and his personal magnetism. He'd only been in Latin America once before in his life, during the previous summer. He'd been there with a former senator from Connecticut, Bill Benton, who was then president of the Encyclopedia Britannica Company which had been bought by the University of Chicago. He was taking a goodwill trip around Latin America and talking with people about Spanish editions and things of that kind, and he had invited Adlai Stevenson to join him. It was probably a three-week trip. When our group came the following year, Adlai Stevenson was treated as if he were one of the great Latin American experts in the United States. Crowds were always pursuing him wherever he appeared in public and one really had a feeling of magnetic communication between him and the crowds. He didn't have a word of Spanish, so he would speak in English with the help of an interpreter, but his ability to establish rapport was remarkable. I guess it was this curious quality which people describe as charisma. He had it.

When we came back, Stevenson and I reported to President Kennedy. Ellis Briggs got altitude sickness in Ecuador and Colombia and wasn't able to join us. And Kennedy was ill, convalescing from something or other. So we called on him in his bedroom in the White House to make our report. One of the questions was whether, if the Conference of Punta

Library of Congress

del Este was a success, the President should come and have a summit meeting at the end with the Latin American presidents. That was another subject on which Stevenson couldn't seem to make up his mind. He found it hard to recommend one way or the other, although Briggs and I both thought the answer clearly should be no. It would not be wise; it would have been embarrassing to a number of Latin American presidents; and it was not called for at that point. The meeting with the President was very cordial, a long session lasting probably an hour and a half. Kennedy was quite relaxed lying there in bed. So that was another step in the personal relationship between the two of us.

At the time of the Stevenson mission in June of 1961, the president of Brazil was Janio Quadros, who had been elected in October 1960 — just a few weeks before Kennedy's election. He took office January 31, eleven days after Kennedy took office. He was supposed to carry on Kubitschek's developmental thrust but more soberly, with less inflationary pressure and generally in a more moderate and effective manner. Kubitschek had been a very exciting president; and the new capital at Brasilia was one of his great works. Brasilia was regarded by all Americans and most Brazilians as a spectacularly over-expensive and wasteful relocation of the capital from Rio de Janeiro. It should have been delayed at least until more urgent, higher-priority things, were completed. But Quadros had been an effective mayor of Sao Paulo city and then Governor of Sao Paulo state, by far the most important state in Brazil. He seemed like an excellent manager. Stevenson had a three-hour conversation with Quadros at his weekend house in Sao Paulo, in which I participated. By then everybody knew I was going to be Ambassador to Brazil. Quadros treated me personally very cordially in that long interview. It had been scheduled for one hour but he gave us three hours. Then he came out into the garden afterwards, and with hundreds of photographers there, Quadros put his arms around Stevenson, in a cordial Brazilian abraço.

On the plane on our way back to Washington, as we were writing our report, we ranked Quadros rather high among the ten presidents that we had visited. We were quite wrong

Library of Congress

as it turned out. My name was sent to the Senate on the 24th of August; on the 25th of August, Quadros resigned from the Presidency, creating a major crisis in Brazil.

Q: Why did he resign?

GORDON: There is no clear answer. My own conviction — which I think most Brazilian journalists, historians and others subscribe to — is that he expected the Congress to refuse his resignation and offer him a sweeping delegation of powers. But there is some controversy about this. Quadros himself is back in Brazilian politics! He is the mayor of Sao Paulo city once again. On the 25th anniversary of his resignation which was a year ago, he had an interview with a leading newspaper, in which he said he had resigned because the pressures against him were such that he couldn't do what he wanted to, and in fairness to himself, his self-respect, he had to resign. But that really didn't explain anything. I don't think that the pressures against him were all that severe. So the answer isn't entirely clear. He'd been acting oddly in the Presidency. This could be a long story, but I think the essence of the answer is that it was a bid for more power. He had sent his vice-president, Goulart, on a mission to Communist China, which was not recognized by Brazil at the time. The Brazilian military were very suspicious of Goulart, because of episodes in the early 1950's and most of Congress did not think highly of him either. Quadros probably thought that when he submitted his letter of resignation, they would say: "Oh no, Mr. President, what do you want? We can't possibly let you resign." So it was essentially a bid for wide discretionary powers. But that didn't happen; instead Congress accepted the resignation. The whole country was surprised and shocked. The military tried to keep Goulart from coming back and taking office. There followed a two-week major constitutional crisis. Then the Congress amended the Constitution, converting to a Parliamentary system temporarily. Goulart was allowed to come back, but supposedly stripped of his powers, like the German or Italian presidents. That didn't work. That's another long story. But on the 26th of August I got a letter from Adlai Stevenson — a nice letter — saying: "What's this I read in the newspapers? The President sent your name to the Senate to be Ambassador to Brazil a couple of days ago; then the President of Brazil

Library of Congress

resigned yesterday. Maybe you should have been named to another country where we dislike the president more!"

Did I have trouble with confirmation? Not in the slightest. The hearing was put down for about ten days later, in early September, when Brazil was still in the midst of this crisis. They kept me for about an hour and a half. The Brazil desk officer at the time was with me and they asked almost nothing about me. They apparently were already satisfied on that score. Their questions were all about the Brazilian crisis and what the outcome might be, and why it happened, why Quadros resigned; had we had any advance inklings, and so on. I wasn't able to answer any of those questions, but the officer who was following Brazilian daily did so. We did not have an Ambassador in Rio at the time, since Cabot had already left

Q: The Embassy at that time was still in Rio? Is that right?

GORDON: Oh yes. The capital had only been moved to Brasilia officially in April of 1960, on one of the two Brazilian national holidays, and the city wasn't at all ready for the move. Kubitschek wanted to do it then because his term ended on January 31, 1961. He insisted on the official move several months before he left office because he was quite convinced that, if he left office first, the Congress would reverse the whole project. He was quite right. They disliked the idea of the move. Rio was a very nice city to live in, once air conditioning became available. Kubitschek pushed for Brasilia — well, that's another long story. The whole idea of the move to Brasilia was an ancient one in Brazil. It goes back to the 1880's, but nobody took it seriously.

Q: While you were there, did we have an embassy in Brasilia?

GORDON: We had a small branch, which in fact had been dedicated and the cornerstone laid by President Eisenhower who visited Brazil in June or July of 1960, in his last year in office. Ours was the most substantial embassy building in Brasilia at the time. It was a hollow square, and on one side there was a fairly elaborate apartment where I would

Library of Congress

stay on visits, together with a number of guest rooms and bathrooms. There was a cafeteria-style dining room and offices around the other two. We were staffed with a full Marine contingent, a Communications Officer, a fairly high-ranking Political Officer — in effect a second Political Counselor — who was in charge in Brasilia, and a significant USIA contingent. This was a good place to try to cultivate Congressmen and we were distributing all sorts of American newspapers, books, films, and music. Congressmen had very little to do. Most of them didn't live in Brasilia. They'd come up on Monday afternoons and go home on Friday mornings. So on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, if I were up there and invited a number of Congressmen to dinner, I never had a refusal. They were eager for any kind of diversion!

Q: But basically you were working out of Rio.

GORDON: Out of Rio, oh yes. And the whole Brazilian Government was working out of Rio. The Congressmen met in Brasilia and the Supreme Court met up there. The presidents, both Quadros and especially Goulart, and later Castelo Branco after the military take-over in 1964, probably spent half their time in Rio, and half in Brasilia. Brasilia was still a very rural city. There wasn't sufficient housing and there weren't office buildings for their staffs. Brazil has a very big federal bureaucracy and a fair amount of it is still in Rio even now. At that time the cabinet ministers themselves had not moved up. For me, of course, with the Alliance of Progress a major policy interest, a large part of my responsibility involved working with the Finance Ministry. The Foreign Office didn't yet have a building in Brasilia. It was the last department to move up and that was many years afterwards. My immediate successor Jack Tuthill lived in Rio. His successor, Brick Elbrick, lived in Rio and was kidnaped on his way from the house back to the embassy office after lunch one day. It was only his successor, Bill Rountree, who never lived in the residence in Rio. He was in temporary quarters in Brasilia for many months and finally moved into the house which is now occupied by the American ambassador. So that was a good six or eight years after I came home.

Library of Congress

Q: You must have had a check list of things that you really wanted to get done when you went down to Brazil. What were the main things?

GORDON: Clearly the development of operations under the Alliance for Progress was at the head of my list. There was no question about that. That was why I had been appointed. I believed what Dillon had said in the conversation on the airplane. That program was to be the most important aspect of inter-American relations for the next several years, and it was both my opportunity and my responsibility to get the Alliance to work properly in Brazil. But arriving in the aftermath of this constitutional crisis in Brazil, my first task was to try to learn the names and numbers of the various players in the Brazilian government. My DCM, Niles Bond, was a professional diplomat. He had spent a year at the Harvard Center for International Affairs; there were two or three Foreign Service Officers there each year, and Niles had been in the first or second group. As a member of the core faculty group, I got to know all the State Department fellows.

In 1961, Niles had been in Brazil for several years and was scheduled to leave. I asked the Department to let me keep him for an extra year because I wanted some continuity there. I knew there was a great deal I didn't know about, and I felt more confident with a DCM whom I knew personally and who had been in Brazil all through the last couple of years of Kubitschek and the brief Quadros period. He was in charge at the time of the resignation of Quadros. Some radical students thought the US had something to do with the resignation and they smashed about eleven of the beautiful green tinted windows in what is now the Consulate General in downtown Rio; it was then the embassy's chancery building. Fortunately, by the time I arrived, which was at the beginning of October, the windows had been replaced.

I was originally supposed to arrive in late September. I had been confirmed by the Senate in early September without dissent. There was no debate and a unanimously favorable recommendation from the Committee. But, a regional meeting of ambassadors covering the whole of South America was scheduled in Lima, Peru, for early October. If I had

Library of Congress

gone to Rio, say about the 20th of September, I would have spent a few days there, not even enough time to present my credentials, and then gone off to Lima for the regional meeting. That was considered diplomatically rude and unnecessary, since Niles Bond was doing a fine job as Charg#. So my wife and younger daughter and I went to Lima from Boston and then directly to Rio. I think it was October 13th that we flew over the Andes to Rio, and I presented my credentials in Brasilia, if I recall correctly, on the 19th. That sort of ceremony takes place only in Brasilia. I presented them to Goulart, who by this time had been allowed back under the amended Constitution, supposedly as the equivalent of a parliamentary system president. The Prime Minister was Tancredo Neves, a very interesting politician from the central state of Minas Gerais. By coincidence, he was elected as the first civilian president in 1985 after twenty-one years of military rule. Unfortunately, he became mortally ill on the eve of his inauguration, and was never able to take office. He died a few days later. He would be president today under the new reconstitutionalization of Brazil if he had survived.

Q: Coming back to your arrival in Brazil, did you have, outside of having Niles Bond, did you have any other influence on who was posted there? Did you bring any people with you?

GORDON: I did not make any changes then. I was very interested in a number of the posts. I knew quite a lot of the people because I had planned to go back on my research project early that summer and had been invited simply as a Harvard professor who was interested in Brazil, to give a lecture in early July to their Higher War College — equivalent to our National War College. This is a very influential institution whose students are half civilian and half military officers, at about the rank of colonels and navy captains. I was to lecture on Brazilian-American economic relations, the news that I was to be the American Ambassador was all over the Brazilian press as soon as the leak had appeared in the New York Times. I decided to deliver the lecture in Portuguese. I thought this would make a good first impression. I did not have a speaking knowledge of Portuguese at that time. As a part of my research, I had acquired quite a good reading knowledge so that I could

Library of Congress

pick up a newspaper and read without having to use a dictionary at all. I also picked up a bit of tourist Portuguese, having a fairly good ear. Jack Cabot was still there, and he was very cordial to me. The embassy had eight full time language teachers, all very good. The senior teacher, a brilliant fellow, later came for a graduate degree in linguistics at the University of Michigan. Ambassador Cabot arranged for him to give me lessons every day while I was there.

My first problem was to be able to give this lecture. I had written it all out in English and turned it over to the embassy translating staff. Then I sat down with this language instructor, who said: "Read me the first few sentences," I made some systematic errors, which he corrected right away, and we spent about an hour practicing together. Then he took the manuscript and marked it with accents, putting in extra diacritical marks to guide me on the correct pronunciation. I took it along to the hotel that night, and read it aloud three times. It was about a forty-minute speech. Anybody in the next room must have thought I was absolutely insane. Early the following morning I was called for by an American and a Brazilian military officer to escort me to the War College. In Brazil, you always start speeches with a long salutation to all of the authorities present: "Mr. Commandant of the War College, Mr. this and Mr. that, honored guests, students and so on, and referring to the fifteenth year of the course. I did all of that in Portuguese. The school was equipped with simultaneous interpretation staff and the students all had their earphones on expecting me to speak in English. But I went on in Portuguese to the body of the text and they sort of gasped and took their earphones off. At the end, I had my language instructor include an extra sentence of apology for my freshman Portuguese, which evoked a tremendous round of applause. I could have said anything in the lecture; the content scarcely mattered. It was just a very good ploy for my first semi-public appearance. So working in the Embassy for a week or ten days after that speech, I was meeting all of our key people. I was particularly interested in the AID mission because of the Alliance for Progress. Leonard Saccio, who later became a Foreign Service Officer through lateral entry, was the Chief of the AID mission at the time. It wasn't yet called "AID"

Library of Congress

— the legislation on the Agency for International Development was just being enacted at the time. So I had some acquaintance with all of the top people.

In early October, the USIA Mission head, Aldo d'Alessandro, flew over to Lima to be on the airplane with me on my arrival in Rio. We cooked up a little arrival statement together during that flight, which he then put into Portuguese. I read that in Portuguese to the press. Having had that good experience at the War College in June, it seemed clearly a wise thing to do in October. Also, I had been working quite a lot during that summer on the language. You cannot be an effective Ambassador in Brazil without speaking Portuguese, even though the Foreign Service Officers there, their own diplomats, are all good English speakers. It's a necessary qualification.

Q: It allows you to go beyond the Foreign Ministry. I mean, to get out beyond you have to.

GORDON: That's right. First, there was the case of the President himself. Goulart came from the southernmost state in Brazil and was bilingual in Spanish, as many people there are, but otherwise had no foreign languages. So I either had to have an interpreter or to deal with him in Portuguese. He clearly preferred meeting with me alone. That's something we will come to in a moment. Then at the top level on foreign affairs, the first Foreign Minister I had to deal with was a very interesting Brazilian lawyer named San Tiago Dantas, who had only moderate English. We started our relationship, which later became very close, mostly in English because his English was clearly better than my Portuguese. As my Portuguese improved, we found ourselves talking half and half in both languages, but by a year or so later, we were working entirely in Portuguese.

That was my experience with the language. At the start I arranged to have a lesson with the instructor at 9 o'clock every morning. I had my staff meetings at ten, and that worked for five mornings the first week. The second week business began to interfere, so we cut it down to three lessons that lasted for about three more weeks. Then I had to cut the lessons down to two or one per week, and finally I had to use that first hour of the

Library of Congress

morning for business and I stopped taking lessons entirely. From then on, I completed my acquaintance with the language by using it. Fortunately, that went quite well. In about December of 1961 I was at a meeting in Salvador, Bahia, and was asked to have a television interview. It was my first television interview, and I took along an interpreter, just in case, but never had to ask him for a word. I was very nervous and felt considerable tension, but after two or three months more I was giving interviews all the time — press interviews, television interviews, and giving speeches in the countryside. Generally, if they were formal speeches, I would compose them first in English.

I did write all of my own speeches, incidentally with one exception. I was made an honorary member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, a very stuffy organization, modeled after the Academie Fran#aise. There is a limited number of members with a very high average age. When a new person is inaugurated, there is a great ceremony, with the members dressed in old-fashioned costumes. Although I knew something about Brazilian literature, I did not feel equipped to write a speech on that subject. One of our USIA mission Brazilian officers, specializing in cultural affairs and very well educated, produced a speech which I delivered. I tried to keep my tongue out of my cheek because of references to distinguished Brazilian writers, some of whom I had never heard of before, and many of whom I had never read a word of. With that exception every public speech I gave in Brazil — and there was a large number of them — was my own composition. Occasionally, I had to farm out some sections for research, but I considered speeches a very important part of the job and wanted to convey my own ideas in my own words.

Then the texts were translated by the USIA interpreters and I would deliver them in Portuguese. They would be followed by informal question and answer sessions in Portuguese. After the first six months, I felt quite at home in these sessions. I went back to the War College a year after that first speech, which I had found exhausting. After it, I was so tired that I went back to the hotel and slept for an hour or so. When I came back the second year, the lecture was a full hour and a quarter, followed by an hour of questions and answers — all in Portuguese. It didn't tire me in the least. By then clearly I had the

Library of Congress

language problem under control. That is not to say that I am fluent. I don't consider myself truly bilingual in Portuguese by any means, and I never was, but after about two or three years I was able to tell jokes in Portuguese.

Q: That's the real test.

GORDON: Yes.

Q: Much of the work you did is covered in other interviews and other books.

GORDON: Let's come back to the staff question.

Q: I want to talk more about how you felt the staff supported you, your selection of the staff, and how it worked.

GORDON: At first, of course, I worked with the staff that I inherited. On the whole it was high quality. Within the Latin American region, Brazil is a highly prized post, like London and or Paris in Western Europe. I'm sure that in the Middle East, there are counterparts, perhaps Egypt.

Q: Egypt probably. Beirut at one time.

GORDON: Yes, no longer. Those were happier days. The result was that by and large we had our pick of the better officers who were interested in Latin America. A lot of them had to convert their Spanish into Portuguese, but that isn't so hard. The languages are very similar and most of the large words are identical or just have systematic changes so that they could learn Portuguese quite quickly. Occasionally we would get people who had been in Portugal, and already came with the language. It was a huge embassy.

Q: You said it was the second largest.

Library of Congress

GORDON: Yes, the second largest. I think the largest then was in India where, as in Brazil, there was a very large AID program, or maybe it was in the Philippines. In the Philippines we had a large mission because of the Battle Monuments staff and things of that kind. But in Brazil we had a very big contingent from the USIA, and a very big military advisory group. By Latin standards, there was a substantial military assistance program, part of which was a residue from the Brazilian military collaboration in World War II. All of their equipment was US-built. They were only beginning to have a very rudimentary arms production establishment of their own. Now it's quite large. They are one of the larger arms exporters in the world, but in those days they had very little domestic production. Apart from what would have been the normal kind of supply, we had made a ten-year agreement with them for renting facilities on the island of Fernando de Noronha. It is quite a way out in the South Atlantic, an ideal location for a tracking station for missiles then shot from Florida. The quid pro quo for that was a stated amount of military assistance, so we had a large contingent of officers from all three of the services. I think it was much larger that it needed to be and Jack Tuthill, my successor, as part of what he called "Operation Topsy", had it cut down considerably. But the large size was partly because Rio is an awfully nice place to live in and the Pentagon officers who knew anything about Latin America liked the idea of being assigned there. They were of pretty high quality too.

The Navy mission had the longest tradition. Just after World War I the Brazilians decided they had to modernize their military, and they made arrangements with three countries: the French for the Army, the Germans for the embryonic Air Force, which in 1918 was still very small, and the US for the Navy. So there had been a Navy mission there from about 1920 on. We had a two-star senior rear admiral in charge of it. We also had a regular MAAG, the military assistance advisory group, headed by a major general.

Q: While you mention this, I speak as somebody who has not served in Latin America but has viewed all of this with great suspicion. These armies don't seem to fight anybody

Library of Congress

except internally. What are the purposes of our even supporting the armies there. Is it a pay off to make them happy?

GORDON: That's an interesting question. I was also involved at the time of the decision was made to do it. I was back here from the Marshall Plan working with Averell Harriman in the White House in 1950-51-52, before I went back to London. At that time a Coordinating Committee on foreign aid of all kinds was set up in the State Department chaired by Thomas Cabot, called ISAC (International Security Assistance Committee). I represented the White House on that Committee. One of the difficult issues we dealt with, probably early in 1951, was whether there should be a systematic program of military assistance for Latin America. Basically there were two reasons. One was to keep the supply of military equipment in American hands rather than letting it be taken over by the Europeans. It was quite clear that the military as an institution is important in most Latin American countries except for Costa Rica, and they were going to get some kind of arms modernization somewhere, somehow. We thought it would be better if the supplier were the United States than, let's say France or Britain. We were particularly suspicious about France in those days and French arms salesmen were traveling around Latin America. There had been, after all, very close cultural relations between France and Latin America for many years. In the older generation, pre-World War II, most well-to-do Latin Americans learned French as their first foreign language and they often went to Paris to study. They would know about the latest French novel or French theater production before they knew what was happening in Spanish or Portuguese. So the French had a natural entree into the arms market. The British had been doing a lot of peddling too. The Germans, of course, were out of the game in the '50s entirely, but there were also salesmen from Switzerland and Sweden.

Q:Of course in those days there was no Russian armament coming in. . .

GORDON: No, Russia was not even recognized by most Latin American countries. So, it wasn't that kind of competition; it was essentially West European competition.

Library of Congress

The second reason was our recognition, I think correctly, that the military are politically influential in Latin America. There is big training program, for example at the Inter-American Defense College here at the Fort McNair, at the same location as our National War College. There is also a more junior inter-American training school in Panama. Our theory was that, along with the professional training, we would teach them to respect civilian authority and stop having coups d'etat.

Q: The results can be documented.

GORDON: The results are mixed, to put it mildly. I believe, however, that there were some positive ones as well as the negative ones. Those are basically the reasons. The scale of military assistance in Latin America was quite small. Even in Brazil, where there was a special deal because of Fernando de Noronha, I think the order of magnitude of that deal was only a few tens of millions of dollars per year.

Q: So, you weren't feeling you were participating in an arms race to get them more equipment than say in Argentina or. . .

GORDON: That was a problem we had to cope with. We tried very hard during the period later when I was Assistant Secretary of State. This was one of the top priority items, and it was very very difficult. We tried to discourage the Latins from acquiring excessively modern military equipment. The Brazilians had bought an aircraft carrier, for example, and there are some very amusing stories about that, and the Argentineans, of course, then felt they had to have their American aircraft carrier. There was a lot of rivalry among the air forces. Their arguments for having armed forces — not so much in Brazil whose borders are all very secure — but in some of the other countries go back to real quarrels. Some of them may have been forced by the military around budget time to help one another's budgets. But Argentina and Chile, for example, had a traditional dispute in the far south which only now has been settled. The Pope has been called in as a mediator; the dispute concerns the little offshore islands near Tierra del Fuego. But those navies were

Library of Congress

always having little skirmishes, particularly as I say, around budget time in their respective countries. We tried to discourage that kind of thing. Bolivia used to have a large stretch of coastline on the Pacific which is now entirely occupied by Peru and Chile. Bolivia was always making claims for access to the sea, particularly claims against Chile. Peru and Chile had had a rather celebrated war in the mid-nineteenth century, the War of the Pacific which moved the Chilean border considerably further north. The present copper mines and a lot of the famous guano deposit areas there on the West Coast were formerly Peruvian and had been taken over by Chile. Gaining those fertilizer sources had a lot to do with Chile's prosperity, around the turn of the century. Venezuela and Colombia also have had border quarrels which last to this day. So have Peru and Ecuador.

Q: But in Brazil this was not promoting an arms race. It was a sustaining type of military aid. . .

GORDON: Certainly not promoting any arms race whatever. It was rather trying to keep the Brazilian armed forces reasonably modern, so they can be self-respecting. We encouraged them to engage in civic action, although they didn't need much encouragement because it was already in the Brazilian tradition. But we helped out with equipment. One of the tasks of the Brazilian Army, particularly, which is by far the most important of three services, is to keep watch on the more remote parts of the interior around the north and the northwest, the fringes of Amazonia. They have army posts all over the remote regions and for rather thin populations, they provide medical care and assistance in emergencies. They also do road building and other types of civic action projects. Also I would find that military officers were almost the only Brazilians to be familiar with the north of their own country. Other Brazilians who live in the south who are not poor, although not necessarily very rich, would know a lot about Rio and Sao Paulo, quite a lot about Western Europe, particularly France, and a lot about the United States. Almost all of them who have enough money would have been to New York, at least, if not the rest of the United States. But they would know nothing about the north of Brazil. That was terra incognita to them. I remember a dinner party one night when we were

Library of Congress

leaving the next day to visit Piaui, the poorest state in the north. It had the lowest per capita income, and a quite small population. We were also going to make official visits to a couple of neighboring states for the first time. My wife told me afterwards that her neighbor on the right — the guest of honor whoever he was — had fallen into a conversation about our travels and she said: "Tomorrow we are going to Piaui". He looked at her in astonishment and said : "PIAUI!" This is in Portuguese: "Piaui nao existe. There is no such place." It doesn't exist. For him Piaui was the last place in the world. He would far rather go to New Zealand than to Piaui.

For the army officers, in contrast, it's part of their duty to go around these border posts, and they all become acquainted with the north and the northwest of Brazil. They come to know these outlying places and they get involved in trying to assist them. When we visited a new state, it was like visiting a new country. There would be local militia troops out in dress uniform at the airport which we would have to review, and the local band would do its best to play "The Star Spangled Banner", often in very odd ways. Then we would call on the Governor, and on the State Legislative Assembly. I am an honorary citizen of about half the Brazilian states as a result of this. We would then call on the local bishop or archbishop — whoever the senior Roman Catholic dignitary was; we would call on the head of the Chamber of Commerce and the head of the local trade union federation and then we would call on the local commanding general. That was the regular routine. The visits included, in effect, all the authorities in that region. The army traditionally takes a lot of pride in its role of protecting the physical integrity of the country.

After presenting my credentials in mid-October 1961, I made appointments to meet all the cabinet ministers that I would have any business with at all, and that meant practically the entire cabinet. We had business with almost every department and agency — economical, military assistance, or some kind of technical help. In the Brazilian tradition, there is no civilian Defense Minister. Each of the three armed services is headed by a general or admiral in uniform. The Air Force General (the title in Brazil is Brigadeiro) had had a rather distinguished past, including being an unsuccessful candidate for the presidency in 1945

Library of Congress

and 1950. A rather attractive man, he had been involved in an important episode in Brazil's history back in the early 1920's. We had a very cordial talk about his personal history. Then he said: "There is one request I would like to put to you. Really urgent. It has to do with the Air Force role in civic action." It was the Hercules aircraft, C-130. He said: "I have read about them; I know what they can do." He then went into a full discussion of the problems of the isolated north and northeast and some of the things the Air Force had to carry. He said: "If we could have three of these, it would transform our capacity for civil action."

Q: They are ideally suited. They were used in Vietnam for just this type of thing. They take off in a short space; they can carry a lot; the fuselage opens up, so you can drive things in. It's a sort of a workhorse. It's the present-day equivalent of the DC 3.

GORDON: Right, but on a much larger scale. I sent in that request and shortly before I left the post of Ambassador in the last months of 1965, those three planes finally arrived. They were a rather long time in coming!

Q: A little on this topic. We have skipped around a bit, but at least before the military take over, you saw the military as not just being a group of arrogant officers who were lording it over people, but actually very much involved in civic action. Maybe they weren't ideal types, but at least they were very patriotic.

GORDON: Absolutely. The military until 1964 had intervened in Brazilian politics several times, but each time rather briefly and bloodlessly. There were never any civil wars in Brazil. The separation from Portugal in 1822 was peaceful. The Regent, the son of the King of Portugal, in effect declared Brazil's independence when the Portuguese Parliament tried to get him to come back to Lisbon. They established the Brazilian Empire, a constitutional monarchy which lasted from 1822 to 1889. For most of that time, the throne was occupied by Peter II, a remarkably advanced, highly cultured monarch. When, for a lot of reasons, the republicans came into power, the military gave Peter his sailing

Library of Congress

orders, and he was packed off to exile in Europe in 1889. Then the “Old Republic” was declared. That was one bloodless coup. There were a couple of other skirmishes. Vargas took power in the 1930's, but again without bloodshed. The military were then actively involved in World War II on our side. In 1955, some Navy officers tried to keep Kubitschek from taking office after his election. That's why he bought the aircraft carrier, in order to pacify the Navy. And it worked. When he left office, Quadros had been elected and the succession took place absolutely peacefully, like one of ours. But it was the only such case post-World War II in Brazil.

Yet the tradition of the military after each of the interventions was to go back to the barracks. They were supposed to exercise what under the imperial constitution had been called the “moderative power” of the Emperor. The old imperial constitution was a kind of oligarchical democracy, since the franchise was rather narrow, but there was a conservative party and a liberal party. They alternated in power and they also alternated regionally under the Empire. Again in the First Republic, the military regarded themselves as holding the moderative power. The theory, backed by a specific written provision in the constitution, was that if elective politics seemed somehow or other to be threatening the integrity of the country or the general social order, the Emperor could intervene and remove a Prime Minister. Peter II did exercise this power once or twice in the course of the nineteenth century. Brazil in that period faced some major problems, including the abolition of slavery, which was done there peacefully, not the way we did it. It was completed in 1888, by the famous Golden Law, with the stroke of a pen. But they had already gone through some intermediate phases. So, Brazilian politics in the nineteenth century was not entirely free of highly controversial issues. There were also some words in the 1946 Constitution, the democratic constitution which was in force when I arrived, which indicated a somewhat analogous responsibility. Even though the President was Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, there was a paragraph (Article 177) about the responsibility of the Armed Forces for defending the nation and “guaranteeing the constitutional powers, law and order.”

Library of Congress

Q: So at that time, everyone in the embassy who was familiar with Brazilian affairs looked upon the military as being more a stabilizing influence than a threat to democracy in the long term.

GORDON: At the moment of my arrival, Brazil had just one through a severe crisis. One or two days after Quadros resigned, the then three military ministers issued an ultimatum. Meanwhile the Speaker of the House, of the Chamber of Deputies, had been sworn in as acting president. There is always an interim president in Brazil. If the president goes abroad, either the vice-president or, if there is no vice-president, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, is formally sworn in, and takes the sash, the symbol of the presidential office. The theory is that there must always be a president in the country, even if the actual president goes away just on a one- or two-day trip, which nowadays happens quite frequently.

So when Quadros resigned, that very evening the rather innocuous Italian-Brazilian Speaker, a man named Ranieri Mazzilli from Sao Paulo, was sworn in as acting president. Under the Constitution, Vice-President Goulart, who was out in Communist China, was supposed to come back and succeed. But then the three military ministers issued an ultimatum saying they would not tolerate his return as President of Brazil. It happened that Goulart's brother-in-law, a man called Brizola who is now again prominent in Brazilian politics, was the Governor of their native state, Rio Grande do Sul. That is the southernmost state of Brazil, and has a reputation for breeding "gaucho" types — excitable cowboy types. Brizola had acquired a number of radio stations, since television didn't yet exist in Brazil, and he organized what he called "The Chain of Liberty". It was focused entirely on preaching the right of his brother-in-law to come back and assume the Presidency, to which he was constitutionally entitled. There was serious concern about the possibility of civil war. One idea the Brazilian military hated was to take up arms against one another; that was very clear in 1964, when there seemed to be real potential for a civil war. Mistakenly, as it turned out, I thought that was a really lively possibility. In

Library of Congress

the 1961 crisis, an important part was played by the Third Army, based in Rio Grande do Sul. That Army accounts for a rather large part of the total Brazilian Armed Forces since it is stationed on the Argentinean and Uruguayan borders. The commander of that Army declared for letting Goulart return. In other words, he took a stand against his own Minister. So you really had the potential for serious strife. The compromise was devised by this interesting politician, San Tiago Dantas, who later became Goulart's first Foreign Minister. Up in Brasilia they scurried around trying to find some way out of the crisis which would ward off the danger of civil war.

Q: Did we play any role.?

GORDON: Not an active role, no. We were just keeping informed. I was reading the telegrams regularly during that period and talking on the telephone with Niles Bond. We played no role in that settlement whatever. We were mystified by the whole affair, since we had not expected the Quadros resignation. These events really took us by surprise.

Q: It also probably took the Brazilians by surprise.

GORDON: It took all Brazil by surprise. Oh, yes.

Q: It's still an unsettled question exactly why Quadros resigned.

GORDON: That's right.

Q: One of the problems that has been discussed about the United States in its representation abroad is its inability to develop good ties to the left. It is said that we know people we can do business with, and those people have often been educated in the United States, they come from the upper class. They certainly don't come from the left. How did you find our ties with the left when you got to Brazil and were you able to change the situation?

Library of Congress

GORDON: The left in Brazil was a complex set of interests and organizations at that time. Communist Parties were illegal. Brazil had broken diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1948. During the War they were both allied with us. They broke off in 1948, partly under a pretext, partly with reason. The Russians had treated the Brazilian Ambassador in Moscow very rudely in some episode; Brazil had demanded an apology and Stalin had refused; and the Brazilians withdrew their Ambassador. Then they decided to go further and cut diplomatic relations entirely. But it was also for domestic reasons. They were getting worried about the strength of communism in Brazil and they simultaneously outlawed the Communist Party. That, of course, didn't stop the communists from participating in politics under other labels. Everybody in the press and all the foreign embassies was aware of the considerable number of well-known communists who didn't try to hide their Party membership. In fact there was a daily communist newspaper in Rio, and also a weekly. There had been a split, so there was a Maoist faction also. One faction was called the PCB, which translates directly as "Brazilian Communist Party"; the other was called PC do B, "Communist Party of Brazil", that was the Maoist Group.

The more moderate left included the Labor Party which was one of the three really parties at that time. It was Goulart's own party. The Labor Party had been formed by Vargas in the early 1940s, when he was dictator. Vargas had become President half illegally after a hotly contested election in 1930. But step-by-step in 1932 and 1935 and 1937, he had converted Brazil into a fascist state with the so-called Estado Novo, (New State) Constitution. That he promulgated by his own decree in 1937. It was basically a Mussolini-type corporate state, and Brazilian trade unions really owed their existence to this constitution. It was a very elaborate system, in which each industry was supposed to have symmetrical counterparts of labor organizations and industrial management organizations.

Q: Very much the fascist system?

Library of Congress

GORDON: Exactly on the fascist model. The Labor Party was also tied in with the Social Security Institutes, which were organized in parallel for the same industrial groupings. There was a tremendous amount of patronage moving back and forth between the bureaucracy and the Social Security Institutes, the bureaucracy and the trade unions. As in Fascist Italy, strikes were outlawed. That was the trade-off; labor was officially recognized and organized, but strikes were forbidden. After the War, strikes were then re-legalized under the democratic constitution of 1946, but the organization of labor remained heavily subsidized and controlled by the Government. There was a special tax to finance all these labor organizations, and a lot of influence by the Minister of Labor in appointments to the Social Security Institutes and the trade unions as well. These were not really free trade unions. We made a big effort to try to encourage free trade unions as we had in Western Europe. The AFL-CIO had people all over Latin America including some nominees to our own labor attach# staff. The ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) was very active, but never made very headway in Brazil. They had friends in Brazil, but the officially subsidized organization remained dominant all through the period I was there. When the military took over in 1964, they threw out a lot of the leaders who they thought were too far to the left, but they didn't change the structure. The structure is still intact to this very day. There is more independence now in some unions like the metallurgical workers in Sao Paulo, but the system is still very much dependent on the Federal Government.

Q: So to get to the left. . . If you are talking about labor, then labor has almost been co-opted into the Government?

GORDON: That's right. That didn't mean that there were not some very left-wing labor leaders, including some communists. They were somewhat in disguise, so to speak, since there was no Communist ticket for them to run on. But they were well known despite the disguise.

Library of Congress

Left-wing intellectuals, of course, were numerous. As I said in some speech, at one time the Marxist tradition among Brazilian social scientists was dominant. That was less the case among economists than others, but political scientists and sociologists are much more numerous. It doesn't mean that they are Communist Party members, but basically they accept the Marxist analysis of society.

In the government when I arrived, there was a coalition that had been put together by Tancredo Neves. He had been appointed Prime Minister by Goulart under the constitutional compromise. Goulart had taken office on September 7, roughly a month before my arrival. My first questions to Niles Bond, my DCM who had been Chargé during the crisis, was: "Is this really a Parliamentary System? Does the President have any power, and if so how much?" Niles laughed and replied: "A few days ago a newspaper reported that at a party downtown the other night, Goulart was overheard saying in a very loud tone of voice, obviously intended to reach the ears of the journalists: "If anybody supposes that I'm going to be a Queen of England, he'd better think again." That was a very interesting statement. When I went to Brasilia to present my credentials I had my first conversation with him, and I was alert to this issue. Unfortunately at that moment I couldn't speak Portuguese very well, even though I could understand what he was saying to me. As my teacher said, I had an enormous passive vocabulary but only a feeble active vocabulary. I read, for the benefit of the press, a short formal statement in Portuguese which I had prepared, and then listened to what he had to say. We were together for about half an hour, just the two of us. That was quite surprising to me. I had assumed that when I met with the President, the Foreign Minister would be there, or at least the President's executive secretary. Goulart clearly didn't want that. He wanted private conversations and it became increasingly clear as our relationship developed that he wanted to talk to me about all kinds of things that were not really appropriate for a foreign ambassador. Even in this first interview, when I was presenting my credentials, the sentence of his that sticks in my mind was more or less: "I hope that you will free to advise me not only on Brazilian-American relations but also on my role as leader of Brazil's popular party."

Library of Congress

That was in the course of our very first meeting! He had been Vice President under Kubitschek, but during my research in 1959 and 1960 there was no reason to meet him. He was not well thought of. He was elected Vice President for the second time, in 1960, along with Quadros, but the two elections were separate. Quadros had a plurality of several million in a three-way race while Goulart had a plurality of only about a hundred and fifty thousand. He only barely squeaked in. When I was down for that War College speech In July 1961, I asked the American colonel who was escorting me: “What do people think about Goulart? I knew that back in the '50s he had some sticky passages with the Brazilian military. They pressured Vargas into firing him from the job of Minister of Labor in 1954. The colonel replied: “If anything happens to Janio Quadros, which God forbid, they would never let Jango (Joao Goulart's nickname) take office.” That was two months before Quadros' resignation — a contingency that didn't enter anyone's mind.

Q: Mr. Ambassador, could we go back to covering the ability of your staff to have ties to the left. Did we have good ties, at least working ties, with radical elements of the left?

GORDON: In part, certainly among members of Congress we were acquainted with the whole spectrum. There was a radical left group within the Labor Party, known as the “Compact Group”. It took the lead, for example, in the enactment in 1962 of a measure sharply limiting the remittance of profits by foreign investors. Members of our political section, and I myself also were well acquainted with this group. At one point, while I was visiting the Embassy in July 1961, though not yet Ambassador, Ted Kennedy, then the “baby brother” of the President, came down to Rio. He had heard something about this group. I happened to go up to Brasilia with him on the same plane. He especially wanted a meeting with these people and took me along. He had to leave early to take a plane back to Rio, so I stayed on and talked with the “Compact Group” for an hour after he left. I maintained some acquaintanceship with several of them later when I was ambassador. Our cultural staff was fairly well acquainted with professors and writers. They probably did not reach the most extreme, aggressively anti-American left, and maybe not Communist

Library of Congress

Party members, but certainly they knew people well to the left of center. Our labor attach# staff knew many of the trade union leaders. There were two in that job during my four-and-a-half years there. John Fishburn particularly stands out in my memory. Although he was very strongly anti-Communist, as was the AFL-CIO here at home, he was pretty widely acquainted among Brazilian labor leaders, but their whole labor organization had the drawbacks I was describing before, being tied to an essentially corporative fascist style system. Nonetheless, there were some pretty radical labor leaders in that group and John knew most of them personally. He would have informal debates and arguments with all of them.

On the other hand, certainly as a proportion of our total contacts, it was much easier for us to get along with the center and the center-right, though not the extreme right. There was an extreme right in Brazil too. Before the War, there had been a genuine fascist movement — they called themselves “Integralistas” and wore a green shirt uniform like Hitler's brown shirts. They wanted Brazil to copy Italy and Germany. Vargas himself was a very moderate fascist, if you can call him a fascist at all. He was an authoritarian ruler and imposed some pretty repressive measures, including total censorship of the press. He almost had a constitutional revolution on his hands in the city of Sao Paulo, which lasted for a few months, back in 1932. Yet, he was obviously not an extreme fascist, or he would never have joined World War II on our side. He had in his cabinet some very moderate people, including especially his famous Foreign Minister, Oswaldo Aranha (a name that means spider), who later became the first Chairman of the U.N. General Assembly. It was really Aranha who persuaded Vargas to join the Allied side in World War II. But there were residues of these Green Shirt types. I never met any of them, but one would hear about them. One of them, Francisco Campos, wrote the Institutional Act in April of 1964 which was to provide the legalistic rationalization of the military government.

On the other hand, the moderately right of center people predominated in the business community and in the armed forces. The armed forces, I would say, were not in the mold of the Spanish-American caudillo types. And there were a number of quite left-wing

Library of Congress

officers, whom Goulart, particularly in the last years of his presidency, tended to promote out of turn. He tried to build up a kind of core within the armed forces that would be loyal to him, because he could see that there were dangers on his horizon. So even the armed services were not in any sense uniformly right of center, in contrast to Argentina, where I think it would be very hard to find a left-wing military officer.

In the Church, a very influential institution in Brazil, I discovered, much to my surprise, that there was by no means a monolithic political attitude. I had supposed that there would be a formal hierarchical structure, which of course does exist, and that doctrine, including attitudes on current political matters, would be passed from the Vatican down to the Papal Nuncio, and then to the archbishops and bishops of Brazil. One must keep in mind that Brazil has more Roman Catholics than any other single country in the world. So it is a country of great importance from the Church's point of view. The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops is a very influential body. But I discovered that, in fact, at the level of the bishops there was an enormous diversity of political opinion. It runs all the way from very conservative to very radical. There were sharp debates in the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. That also happens to this day, debates on such issues as whether they should support land reform, or debates about how to teach adult literacy. There was a famous literacy program in the 1960s led by a chap named Paulo Freire. It was a new system of teaching literacy by syllables instead of single letters, which apparently makes learning much faster. But the text books that were used were very class-conscious. Instead of pictures of John and Jane, so to speak, they would have pictures of landlords and peasants and the text they were learning would say very unpleasant things about the landlords.

Q: Was that the famous "Forty Hours in the Revolution", or something like that?

GORDON: I believe so.

Library of Congress

Q: How did we approach that? I mean, literacy is obviously a keystone to the Alliance of Progress. Here was a program that at least was making a claim that within forty hours they could produce somebody who would be literate enough to vote, which would be really revolutionary. But at the same time the process was in itself suspect. How did you deal with that?

GORDON: On that, it would be better to inquire of somebody who was actually working in our AID Branch Mission in the northeast in Recife. We were all in favor of adult literacy and also expanding elementary education and secondary education, as well as higher education. We had many programs, usually at the state level to support the building of schools and at the university level, training, especially of applied kinds. My recollection of the specific problem of Freire's program is that it was highly controversial both within SUDENE and in our regional mission. Our people thought that Freire's claims for originality of method were exaggerated, but in any case we didn't like the books. On the other hand, we didn't have any control over the books that were used. I don't think any of our money went in support of producing those particular books. But some of our money certainly was used for adult literacy programs. The details of how much argument we made about it I'm not sure I even knew at the time. I certainly don't recall it now.

Q: Let's go back to the Church. How did we deal with the Church? Did we have ties? Being an important element obviously we wanted to keep up with what the Church was thinking. . .

GORDON: In the first place we had, in addition to the branch embassy in Brasilia, two Consulates General in Sao Paulo and Recife and six more Consulates around the country. So all the largest cities of Brazil had an official American representative. Among the persons that these regional Consulates would become acquainted with were the local bishops and others in the local Church hierarchy. In Sao Paulo, I remember meeting the Cardinal Archbishop on my first official visit. He was a very elderly man, and the Auxiliary Bishop was a more effective person at that time. The Archbishop had a couple of very left-

Library of Congress

wing advisers and I had been alerted that I might run into some odd political views. He asked me to visit him in his residence, which is a very lovely place up on a hillside in Sao Paulo. Outside was his warm-up tree was a walnut tree grown from a cutting from a tree planted by George Washington, which grows to this day in Mount Vernon. He was very proud of this. Then we got into a general discussion. At some point, he said: "The masses in Brazil are suffering from inflation." At that time the rate was about 25% a year, which to us sounds high. Now they have reached 600 to 800 percent a year, which is a different kind of experience. But even in 1961 it was bad. It was higher than they were used to and they were not indexing wages and other payments to compensate for inflation as they later learned to do. He went on: "You are supposed to know something about economics. Isn't it the case that inflation is simply the result of the greed of the employing classes, the merchants. A man, at least in a city like Sao Paulo, needs shoes, At a shoe store the merchant can charge anything he pleases." This notion struck me as rather rudimentary. It wouldn't even have earned a D minus in an economics course. I tried to think quickly how to explain. I said: "Your Excellency," which is how one addresses bishops, "let me put to you the case of Italy." Italy at that time had enjoyed a remarkable economic boom for several years, with very low inflation. I said: "Do you suppose that Italian merchants are any less greedy than Brazilian merchants?" "No", he said, "certainly not; maybe even greedier for all I know." I said: "Well, it is a fact that Italy has had very substantial economic growth for the last ten years and the rate of inflation is only about 2 percent a year," — or whatever it was at that time. "How can that be?" he asked me. "That's very interesting how can that be? I tried to explain to him the meaning of competition. "It isn't really the case that the merchant can charge anything he wants for shoes as long as there are other merchants who are also trying to sell shoes." That came to him as a new idea. "Very interesting." he said. "Is there some book, an easy book that I could read on matters of this kind?" There wasn't any truly elementary sort of economic textbook available in Brazil. I later suggested to an economist friend of mine, who later became Minister of Finance, that he a number of very simple articles for the press which would provide this kind of

Library of Congress

education. Meanwhile the Archbishop reverted back to talking about exploitation by foreign investors and so on.

I suppose the most famous left-wing Brazilian bishop is Dom Helder Camara ("Dom" is a courtesy title for all bishops). Dom Helder got an honorary degree from Harvard about four or five years ago. He's now the Bishop of Olinda and Recife, which is a very important diocese in the northeast. He and I had very cordial conversations. We didn't agree. In the United States, I am considered somewhat left of center, though I consider myself at the very center. But in Brazilian terms I clearly was to the right of their center which was well to the left of ours. That's because of the Marxist tradition, which is spread all over Latin America, at least during the last forty or fifty years. The bulk of professional intellectuals, professors, teachers of social sciences, tend in overwhelming proportions to have basically Marxist world view. To them the notions of class structure and class conflict are the most important social phenomena, and imperialism is the most important international phenomenon. Profits are always seen as exploitative, illicit, and immoral. Even if they don't believe in trying to seize power through an organized Communist Party, their analysis of social realities is essentially in Marxist terms.

Our embassy staff often found itself debating these views. I had many meetings with professors and students. One was held on an abysmally hot night up in Manaus, 1200 miles up the Amazon, just before they installed a new power plant for the city. Their old power plant was built during the rubber boom, around 1910, floating on a barge in the river. In this large hall — there were several hundred people in my audience — there was just one small electric bulb for the entire place. The temperature must have been close to a hundred with the humidity seeming over a hundred percent. Manaus at that time didn't have a university, but there were a number of so-called "independent Faculties", so there were university level students. I probably had the whole student population of Manaus in the hall that night. A number of them had been coached for this meeting by left-wing teachers, so they thought they would embarrass me with tough questions. Our consul in Belem, who also covered Amazonia, had scouted around to pick up some rumors about

Library of Congress

the kind of questions I would be asked. So I prepared myself with about eight theses that I would lay down and argue. That was intended to forestall some of their questions and put them on the defensive instead of the offensive. I began with a statement of each thesis and five minutes of explanation, backing it up with statistics where appropriate. It worked very well. Their attitude was typical of radical students, hostile but not violent about it. They were personally very cordial.

In addition to the consuls, we had a large staff of USIA people and we had a fairly sizable CIA contingent including someone in each of these consulates. They were generally fluent in Portuguese — high quality people who were given pretty long tours of duty, so they got to know many people in the communities where they lived. They would also take on left-wing student groups in debates about American policy. I would say we had reasonable access to the moderate left, and also some parts of the more radical left.

Q: During the Kennedy administration there was a great push to identify and cultivate youthful leaders. How did you work with that?

GORDON: It didn't come at the very start. There was the Peace Corps, and Brazil had one of the largest contingents. My first high level official visitor from Washington was Sargent Shriver, the Director of the Peace Corps. He came down to complete negotiations on a bilateral Peace Corps agreement with the government. In the next week or so, the two of us together worked out with the Foreign Minister the first formal Peace Corps agreement in the world. Our first Peace Corps group was a bunch of young 4-H Club leaders, young farm types who would work with Brazilians in the northeast on what they call 4-S Clubs, essentially the same idea. It was a very successful project. The second project was an effort in the far west of the country to promote "community development". Nobody had defined the concept clearly and I predicted to our local Peace Corps director that it would be a fracasso — a failure. The idea of a special embassy officer assigned to try to cultivate youth and the youth groups came only around 1965. My first youth officer has become rather well known since. It was Frank Carlucci, who had just been declared persona non

Library of Congress

grata in Zanzibar. That was before Zanzibar and Tanganyika had joined to form Tanzania. He was back in the Department and nobody knew what to do with him. Then came this program which I think was inspired by Bobby Kennedy to have youth officers in each of the larger embassies, so Frank was assigned to our political section. He did a terrific job, organizing all kinds of activities. We only overlapped for about six months, but when I left in early 1966 he had all sorts of projects going.

Another youth program was supported by us financially although it was developed by a private organization called the Inter-University Foundation. It was a student leader exchange, led by the wife of an American business man in Sao Paulo, Henry Sage. His wife, Mildred Sage, was a very intelligent woman who had developed a program for locating potential youth leaders in Brazil, mostly at the university level, and bringing a group of them to the United States each summer for about three weeks. The first week was at Harvard with a program on US history, politics, and culture organized by Henry Kissinger. The second week was here in Washington sightseeing and governmental visits under guidance from the State Department. The third week involved some kind of experience elsewhere in the country, either in an industrial city or on a big farm, in order to get some feel of the United States outside of Boston and Washington. I must say that Mildred Sage did a superb job. They had competitive contests to become selected for the program and she made it a point to lean in favor of left-wingers, not to take half-Americanized types and give them this extra boost. They had representatives all over the country whose task it was to identify student leaders. The student organizations in those days, before the military take-over, were not uniformly radical, but they tended to be on the left or far left. The UNE, the National Union of Students, with its headquarters in Rio, was a very radical body.

I suspect that the UNE was responsible for the stoning of the American Embassy windows after Quadros's resignation in 1961. On the very day of the 1964 Revolution, they were calling for rallies in our neighborhood. One group assembled two blocks west of our office building and another group two blocks east. We anticipated a possible effort to storm the

Library of Congress

embassy office. We had a general evacuation, except for our Marine guards and half a dozen senior officers. We turned off the air conditioners, because the building wasn't well designed for resisting a siege, although we enjoyed the big glass green-tinted windows. If a fire started anywhere, the air conditioning system would send the smoke right through the whole building with great speed. It was a rather warm and humid day, April 1, 1964. Vernon Walters, the present ambassador to the UN, likes to tell the story. He was our military attach#. The others huddled in my office included the DCM, Gordon Mein, who unfortunately was murdered in 1968 in Guatemala where he had gone as Ambassador. He was the first American ambassador to be murdered in recent years. It happened in broad daylight in downtown Guatemala City, and they were probably trying to kidnap him. Then the group in my office included the economic minister, Jack Kubisch, who was also the head the AID mission. He later joined the Foreign Service and became Ambassador to Greece and perhaps somewhere else.

Q: I'm not sure, I think so.

GORDON: He was also Assistant Secretary for Latin America at one point. Then there was our political counselor, John Keppel, and the CIA station chief. I think that was the entire group that stayed behind in the embassy.

Q: This was really your operating team?

GORDON: That's right.

Q: Did you feel that you were well supported by the CIA and the attach#s?

GORDON: I was just getting acquainted with these arrangements. I believe in the country team idea, which originated with the Marshall Plan. In London in 1952-55, as the head of the economic side of the embassy and the Marshall Plan mission, I was part of it. I believe in giving ample time for communication among the senior members of the staff. I had a staff meeting every day at 10 o'clock. It varied in size. There was a core group of

Library of Congress

about eight, but two days a week it was enlarged to get in some of the outlying officers. For example, the science attach# would come in once a week. We had two different enlargements, one on Tuesdays and one on Fridays. These meetings were all in my own office. There were physical limits to the numbers we could have there. In any case, we wanted a conversation, not a mass meeting.

As to total numbers, I said earlier that we had the second largest US diplomatic mission in the world. There were at the time I left, if I remember correctly, about 2500 in all, equally divided between American and Brazilian nationals, on the official US staff in the country as a whole. They were not all in Rio. These figures include the consulates, the branch embassy, and all the military missions. The largest single component would have been the military because of their advisory groups.

Q: What were the military advisory groups? Were they really necessary?

GORDON: In theory the MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) was advising on the use of the weapons we were supplying, overseeing their arrival, and then training the Brazilians in their use. They would have to work through the manuals, all of that kind of thing. In the case of the Navy Mission, which is the oldest, they were supposed also to advise on the kinds of ships that would make sense for the Brazilians and their maintenance. Then we had a big naval exercise covering all of South America every year in September, which came about the time of my birthday, September 10. It was called UNITAS and it still takes place. It is a joint anti-submarine exercise, led by the United States, but involving the ships and officers in groups from different South American countries. It starts in the Caribbean. Then it has Colombia and Venezuela in one group. The next group consists of Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Rio was the headquarters for that part of the exercise. It was a big annual event for the Brazilian Navy. I would always be invited. We would have a party at the Embassy for the officers and I would be invited for a meal at the Brazilian Navy headquarters. I happen to like the sea, so I went out

Library of Congress

with them on a couple of occasions. One year, because the fleet was going on down to Argentina they sent me back on a destroyer escort.

I had to get from the flagship cruiser down onto the destroyer escort by highline transfer. There was a rather choppy sea, with the two ships steaming side by side at about 20 knots. It was a rather interesting experience. I got there safely. The skipper of the cruiser told me what I think was an apocryphal story — that this method of transferring people was rather new. On a recent occasion, he said, someone with very important documents was seen in the middle of the transfer with only his arm and briefcase visible above the water. It is quite a tricky procedure because keeping the line taut is very difficult when the ships are bobbing about in a very rough sea.

Q: I was asking whether you felt that the support you were getting was adequate.

GORDON: Outside the State Department group itself, the important other supporting agencies were the USIA, the military, and the CIA. We also had first-class financial attach#s named by the Treasury Department. The USIA then was theoretically subordinate to the State Department, but it was really independent. Ed Murrow was in charge of it, the great Ed Murrow from Columbia Broadcasting. The two largest groups were the military and the USIA. The USIA not only had branches with each of the consulates and a very large group in Rio, but also what we called binational centers. They were set up in every city of Brazil of significant size. Brazil today has a population of 140,000,000. At that time it was 60,000,000. It's very decentralized, so there are good-sized towns all over the country. In the larger towns and the big cities they were run by full-time USIA personnel. But in the medium size cities they were run by Americans, usually teachers of Portuguese or students of Brazilian history. They were paid modest salaries and their travel expenses. They wanted a chance to live in Brazil and learn more about it through a part-time job. The main activity of the centers was teaching English; that was the main thing that brought people in. But we also had American newspapers and books and magazines, and some films which could be rented out. They had showings of films, the usual sort of things that

Library of Congress

are done in United States libraries all over the world. But it wasn't limited to the very big cities where we had Consulates. It was spread all over the country. So the USIA staff was large and busy. There were loads of Brazilians applying for scholarships and fellowships. English had displaced French as the main second language, and we found it hard to get enough English teachers to meet the demand. The demand came from all ages and really all classes of Brazilian society.

In general, the staff support seemed to me very good. They clearly liked an ambassador who seemed to be actively interested in what they were doing. I'm not suggesting that Jack Cabot was not, but there had been a fairly long interval there while Niles Bond was in charge, and very busy reporting on the crisis in the fall of 1961. I was very well received by the staff.

Soon after arriving, I drafted my first speech, which was to the American Chamber of Commerce. It was a tradition in Rio that they would be hosts for the first speech there by a new American Ambassador. The subject was the Alliance for Progress. When I finished the draft, I circulated it around to the top staff of the embassy and sent a copy to the Consul General in Sao Paulo, hoping to get comments and suggestions. They may have been intimidated by the notion of suggesting corrections on their new boss's words but didn't think the speech was all that good. I was really disappointed not to receive more constructive criticism.

Q: They were probably waiting to get your measure before . . .

GORDON: I think that's probably right.

Q: That often happens.

GORDON: In any case, I was disappointed. I was not used to the Foreign Service hierarchy, although I had been in the London Embassy for three years. I don't like being called "Mr. Ambassador". I had to get used to it, but never became happy about it. The

Library of Congress

automatic deference one is supposed to give the rank didn't sit very well with me. That's just a matter of taste.

Certainly the general impression I had was of a hard-working, competent collection of people. It turned out an enormous mass of paper. Our daily telegram output was huge. There was a lot going on in Brazil. On the Alliance for Progress side, we were in the early stages of working out what was supposed to become a several hundred million dollar per year program. The rule of thumb, at least in my mind, was that Brazil was a third of Latin America, the Alliance for Progress was roughly a billion dollars a year, so Brazil ought to be getting 300 or 350 million dollars each year. We had to face the questions: What is the best use of that kind of funding? How do we distribute it among the different types of projects? We began with the help of a lot of background information. The World Bank had been in Brazil already on quite a large scale. Brazil later became easily the Bank's single largest borrower. It was automatically the single largest borrower from the Inter-American Development Bank because of its being the biggest country in Latin America. It was a very large borrower from the Export-Import Bank. In fact, the then president of the Export-Import Bank was an old personal friend, and every time I was in Washington I would argue that he should extend more loans to Brazil. He would say, "Oh, but there's too much exposure concentrated in one country." I would reply that Brazil happens to be four times bigger than any other country in their bailiwick — they were mainly Latin American in their interests.

Q: You were mentioning the great mass of reports that went out. Now, let's exclude the Alliance for Progress reports. As to the ones that were reporting on the situation in Brazil — looking back on it, do you think all this was necessary? I'm wondering about the enormous paper flow, because you can get a lot of information about what amounts to a huge country but finally it boils down to probably a few yes and no recommendations by people at the top. Can all of this reporting be absorbed?

Library of Congress

GORDON: It couldn't all be absorbed by any one person. The question is was all of it being read by anybody or was it just dropped in people's wastebaskets or left totally unread. I didn't read all of it myself. I could have spent the whole day doing nothing but reading our outgoing material. After Niles Bond left, my Deputy was Gordon Mein, an extremely diligent officer. He read a great deal that he screened for me. We had rules about who could authorize outgoing telegrams. He and I could do so, and on certain subjects we delegated authority down to the counselor level, but within limits. If it were really important or controversial either Gordon Mein or I was to see it before it went out. And with the CIA there was a complete understanding: I didn't try to clear all their communications in advance, but I saw them all afterwards, and if there was some line of reporting on which I had a difference of opinion the station chief and I would talk about it and, if necessary, he would send a correction.

People have asked me — including Jan K. Black in a recent letter — whether by any chance there might have been a so-called Track Two as in Chile under Nixon with poor Ambassador Korrry. He was almost driven mad by what he later learned about what was happening around him in Chile without his knowledge. By definition, one can't be a hundred percent sure that things done without one's knowledge didn't happen, but I am morally certain there was no such action in Brazil. The instructions from Kennedy were absolutely clear-cut. Kennedy had revised the Eisenhower rule to withdraw the CIA's exception. Under Eisenhower ambassadors did not have to be told about everything the CIA was doing in their country, but Kennedy had changed that rule. My personal relations with each of my CIA station chiefs were good. The last one was there at the time of the military take-over, seemed to me exceptionally good. He was a very cautious fellow and worked very hard on improving intelligence collection in the literal sense.

Q: Did you find that the CIA was a good source of intelligence about what was going on that would be of particular interest to you as the ambassador to anticipate events?

Library of Congress

GORDON: Yes, but not exclusively. We got intelligence as to what was going on from the whole staff. That included the consulates spread around the country, our branch embassy in Brasilia, the political section, and on the economics side, economic and commercial officers, the AID mission, and from the CIA. I certainly feel they were a very valuable source of intelligence but only one among several. There were the military attach#s on the military side. I'm not sure I've ever written about this, but have you run across anywhere a description of how it happened that Vernon Walters was assigned as military attach#?

Q: I think it was covered in Miss Phyllis . . .

GORDON: Phyllis Parker's book.

Q: . . . that he had been working with the Brazilians during the War in our Fifth Army.

GORDON: . . . in Italy. He was liaison officer.

Q: . . . and he was in Italy at the time... you asked for him I believe because you wanted somebody who spoke Portuguese.

GORDON: That's right. It was a personal decision by President Kennedy. That was the interesting aspect of it. I wouldn't have done this on my own. I had known Walters because he was military advisor and interpreter for Averell Harriman in the Paris office of the Marshall Plan back in 1948 and '49 when I was working there. That's where I learned that he had been with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in Italy during the war. In 1962, he was military attach# in Rome, which is considered a very important post for the military intelligence service. In April 1962, President Goulart came to Washington on a state visit for a couple of days, followed by a couple of days in New York and a visit to Chicago. Then, at my suggestion, he went out to the SAC base.

Q: SAC?

Library of Congress

GORDON: Strategic Air Command, in Omaha, Nebraska. I'd heard rumors that Goulart believed, because of Sputnik, that the United States was finished as a superpower. I thought it would be a good idea to cure this illusion. Also I had never seen the SAC headquarters myself, and this was a good excuse. It worked out very well actually; it had the desired effect. On his way back to Rio, Goulart stopped in Mexico, where he had a slight heart attack of some kind. When he got home — this was around May Day — he made some speeches which shifted far to the left. His speeches here before Congress and other audiences had been very moderate indeed, but he seemed to be taking a much more radical lurch to the far left for reasons unclear.

That was somewhat disturbing. Then there was another crisis in Brazilian politics (this is a very complicated story which I won't try to include in this interview; it is well described by Skidmore and others). The first cabinet that had been appointed under the parliamentary system all resigned in June or July because they all aimed to run for reelection to Congress in October. The Brazilian constitution had an obsolete provision that you could not run for Congress if you held any executive office within either 90 days or 120 days of the election. Under a parliamentary system that's ridiculous, because all of the cabinet members are members of parliament by definition. They hadn't amended that particular clause. They should of course have disregarded it, they chose not to for reasons I learned from his legal advisor. I was on good terms with him; it was one of my operating methods to befriend people in the palace to get light on the President's frame of mind. Goulart thought that enforcing this provision would be a good way to give him freedom to choose a new Cabinet, and also to negotiate an early plebiscite to get back his presidential powers.

That's what he wanted most of all. That comment of his about not being the Queen of England really came from his heart. He was a kind of cowboy character himself, a gaucho from the far south. He'd been slightly crippled in a riding accident, so he walked with a limp and that bothered him a great deal. He had a typically gaucho macho kind of conception of himself. There were rumors that his own air attach# had cuckolded him with

Library of Congress

his rather pretty but simple-minded young wife. Rumors of that sort, which were published all over the place, didn't sit very well with his self-esteem, Goulart was trying to prove his manliness in one way or another. The notion of being the only president in Brazilian history with sharply curtailed powers was absolutely unacceptable to him. So he was clearly politicking to get full powers back by every conceivable means. Kennedy had been supposed to go to Brazil on a return visit in July, but with this new political crisis and great turmoil, it was agreed on my recommendation that he not come.

Q: This was Robert Kennedy?

GORDON: John Kennedy. This was supposed to be a presidential return visit. Goulart had been here in Washington in April and Kennedy was supposed to come to Brazil in July. Kennedy agreed to postpone it, but he said, in order to save face for Goulart, let's postpone it to a date certain. So we negotiated a date around Thanksgiving time. Then Kennedy said he'd like me to come back on consultation. He was following events in Brazil in fantastic detail. I was astonished by it. There were then 22 states in Brazil, and several of the governors came up to the United States on visits, including visits to Washington; Kennedy always wanted to receive them personally. Of course they'd come back with PT boat tie pins, overjoyed with having met President Kennedy in the White House. Each time, of course, we had to send briefings on what these people were like before they were received. But Kennedy had an astonishing memory. He'd see me every time I was back, and at some length. (It was entirely different with Johnson.) When we met Kennedy would quiz me: "How is Governor so-and-so coming along, whom I saw three months ago?" Now in July 1962, he wanted to know about the general conditions and prospects for Brazil in this rather murky situation. We had a long conversation late one morning at the White House. He asked me all kinds of questions about political developments, the economic situation and whether there was any serious danger of instability in the regime. I thought there was. There had been some rather serious riots, the economic situation was worsening, and the outcome of the short-range "mini-crisis" was not at all clear. We were speculating together about various possibilities, Kennedy then said, "In a situation like this,

Library of Congress

the military attach#s might get to be very important. How good are they?" I said that the air attach# was quite good, the navy man had just been changed, so I didn't really have much acquaintance with him yet, but the weak sister was clearly the army attach#. The army was by far the most important of the three forces in Brazil anyway I would welcome a first-class army attach#. He asked if I knew anyone. I told him that in general I didn't know who was in the army intelligence service, but that I did happen to know one, because I'd worked with him on the Marshall Plan. I said: "He would be marvelous. You may know him. He was Eisenhower's professional interpreter, during all kinds of summit meetings. His name is Vernon Walters, and he's presently army attach# in Rome." Kennedy said, "Yes, I don't know him well, but I recall his fabulous reputation for handling any number of languages with absolute fluency." I said, "Yes, that's the man." He said, "Look, McNamara is out of the country, but Ros Kilpatrick is Acting Secretary of Defense, and he's on his way over here for a late lunch. You wait in the outer office and intercept him when he comes in. Tell him you have it from me that you should be sent the best army attach# the Pentagon can find, and unless they can find the equivalent, that would be Vernon Walters. I conveyed that message to Kilpatrick.

I was going back to Rio via Miami the next day, leaving in the afternoon. I was awakened early in the morning at the Cosmos Club, where I stayed on these consulting visits, by a call from the Brazil desk man who said, "General Fitch, the head of army intelligence, desperately wants to talk to you. Can you meet him here at the State Department at 8:30?" I said, "Sure." So I got down there at 8:30. There was General Fitch, whom I had never met before, in a state of high dudgeon — absolutely fit to be tied. He impressed me — I may be unfair to him — as a typical Pentagon bureaucrat. He said, "My God, you can't take Walters from Rome. You'll destroy the whole system. We've got a man in training for you as a replacement for. . ." whoever my colonel was. I said, "In training? What's he being trained in?" "Training in Portuguese language." he responded. I said, "You mean he's never served in Brazil before? That doesn't sound very good to me. Look, I don't want to destroy your system or do serious damage to it. But I have very serious problems.

Library of Congress

Brazil is a huge, important country, and the President himself, your Commander-in-Chief, wants to be sure that we've got the best attach# there that can be found. I don't insist that it be Walters, if you've got somebody else as well qualified." He said pleadingly, "Give me a week to identify someone. Will you give me a week?" I said, "Sure, I'll give you a week." And I went back to Rio. About three days later I got a telegram from him with five nominees, all of whom had served in Brazil before. But the fact that they had served there meant that they were known around Brazil so I was able to make some inquiries. None of them could hold a candle to Walters. I sent a polite telegram back saying I was terribly sorry, but these nominees were not of the desired quality. "If you can't do any better than this it had better be Walters." He fired back within a day another telegram with another nominee who, in fact, was very much better—not better than Walters but better than his first tries. I was pondering about that, wondering what I should do, when by good fortune on that very day I was having a visit from General Andrew O'Meara, who was the CINCSOUTH, Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Command in Panama. He regularly made the circuit around South America, coming to Rio about three times a year. By this time, I had been in office for almost a year, and had received him a couple of times. I liked him very much, we were on good terms. I called him Andy, he called me Linc. He came in late morning with his top staff people who were traveling with him and we had a business conversation. When that ended, I said: "Before we go out to the residence for lunch, Andy, could you spare me a few minutes on a private matter. I'd like your advice on it." Then the others all left. I gave O'Meara the whole background and showed him this last telegram. Then I said, "I'm really undecided about this. I would like to accommodate General Fitch if I can without doing disservice to my own requirements here, but this is a very uncertain situation. "I already know Dick Walters." "Look," he said, "you shouldn't have any qualms about this. You're probably the only American ambassador in the whole history of the diplomatic service that's ever had the personal backing of the Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States, on the selection of a specific, highly qualified army attach#. You should take Walters. Fitch will find some way of patching up the system. Don't worry about that. The system's like a self-sealing gas tank. It'll patch itself." With that advice from

Library of Congress

a four-star general, I had no further hesitation. Walters told me later that when he got the news that he was to be transferred to Rio, he thought he was being demoted. In Rome there were two assistant army attach#s, in Rio there was only one. He was a mere colonel then; he thought he'd never get a star.

Q: It's interesting. You know the thread of Vernon Walters has run through successive administrations, even at a lower, I mean less than a colonel's, rank. From World War II and through 1987. Now he's Ambassador to the United Nations and constantly being called on for special missions. Someday somebody will find out about all that he has done, will deem this The Age of Walters or something like that.

GORDON: Walters was a very able army attach#, of course. He arrived about two weeks before the Cuban missile crisis, and he describes this in his own book of memoirs.

Q: "Secret Missions."

GORDON: "Silent Mission." It is not a hundred percent accurate, but it is basically on the mark. He is reputed to have total recall, which isn't quite true, but his memory is pretty good. In essence what he says there about my instructions to him and what he did for me are correct. When we'd go to a state for our first official visit, I used to take him along because he always knew army people there. He'd fought with them in the Italian campaign. He knew them all by first names. They'd have anecdotes to tell about "that day looking at Monte Cassino" or whatever. He also was a very deep reader. This is something many people don't know about him. In addition to his linguistic capacities, which are astonishing, he had read a lot of Brazilian history including regional history as well as national history. He'd turn up in some place and say, "In 1890, this, that or the other important episode in Brazilian history took place right here." He was a bachelor, and I assume he had more time for reading than he would have had if he had with a family. (I say that as the father of four children.) His political posture is a lot more conservative than mine. I guess that was already true at that time; it certainly has become true in subsequent

Library of Congress

years. But the notion, which some people, including Jan Black have tried to suggest, that he might have been running an independent policy of his own and might have been actively involved in the military conspiracy without my knowing about it, I find impossible to believe. In any case, that's how he got assigned to the job.

Q: Do you feel that when you came down to Brazil and in connection with everything that you did with Brazil, that the sort of fiasco of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba and the fact the Kennedy Administration didn't want to be tagged with the idea of losing Brazil. Did you feel that this was a sort of albatross around your neck?

GORDON: No, I didn't have that feeling. At the time I came down, that kind of question didn't arise. The Bay of Pigs didn't count nearly as much in Brazil as it did further north. After all there had never been an American intervention in Brazil. In the late 19th and early 20th century, unlike most of Spanish America, Brazil and the United States had been on very good terms. Economically, these were complimentary. Now they are competitive in all kinds of manufactured goods; in those days Brazil sold coffee and cocoa and sugar, the tropical export products, unlike Argentina, which was directly competitive with beef and wheat.

Brazil had a professional diplomatic service very early. It was organized originally by Peter the Second. The Pan-American Union, which later became the Organization of American States, reflected a very long tradition of special relationship between Brazil and the US, rather like the Anglo-American relationship in European affairs. There was really very little popular anti- Americanism. There was no fear at all when I went there in '61 that there might be a left-wing capture of power. That developed only in 1963. Our whole approach was positive rather than negative. Here was the Alliance for Progress, that was going to push Brazilian development, which had been going strong under Kubitschek, on to a new level of modernization. The book that I'm planning to write now if I get Twentieth Century Fund financing is called "Brazil's Second Chance." The concept behind the book is a second chance to make itself a genuine first-world country. The attitude with which I went

Library of Congress

— and this was the general attitude toward Brazil here in Washington on Kennedy's part and the administration generally — was that Brazil was a potential modern big power, and it would be strongly in the interest of the United States for them to realize that potential as soon as possible. The purpose of the Alliance for Progress in Brazil was to speed that up. It was purely a positive approach.

Q: Here is probably the biggest question of all: The main task that you went down there with was the Alliance for Progress. What was accomplished, what wasn't accomplished, what happened with the Alliance for Progress?

GORDON: It is a very large question. This forthcoming project of mine will try to deal with it much more systematically than a conversation like this can do. I still have to do some research on it. But I think there is a substantial positive legacy on balance, particularly in the development of skills, cadres of skilled people needed in a modernizing society, which were very limited in Brazil before the period of the Alliance for Progress. I can give you a couple of examples. When I went there first in 1959 a big geological survey project was going on. At Brazilian request, the US Geological survey had a team doing a survey of what they call the iron quadrilateral — one of the biggest deposits of high-grade iron in the world. Jack Dorr was the geologist in charge. I struck up a fairly close friendship with him as the years went by. He didn't like Rio, which seemed to him an enervating coastal city. He lived in Belo Horizonte, which is the capital of the state of Minas Gerais and very close to this iron quadrilateral. He had a big Brazilian team working on the project. He also had a training element in the program. It was about a seven year program, and he told me that when it had started a couple of years earlier, there were only six qualified geologists in the country. Here is a country larger than the forty-eight lower US states, with a lot of minerals and a mining tradition that goes back for three centuries. There was a big gold boom in Brazil in the early eighteenth century, plus semi-precious stones and mining of iron, manganese, and so on. Yet here was this large country, with a sixty million population but only six qualified geologists. That was appalling! By that time, through this new training arrangement, Dorr was turning out more than six every

Library of Congress

year and now they have a reasonable number. In economics, which I have a special interest in, as an advisor to the Ford Foundation I had started some technical and financial assistance to the most promising of their economic training institutions, including the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Rio. I was back in Brazil in 1976 and had lunch with the director of the Economics Institute there. I asked him how things were going. He said: "I know the history of this place and I know how much we owe to you personally, both as an advisor to the Ford Foundation and then through the Alliance for Progress." We had had a substantial program of assistance. Their brightest students were sent up here, to get M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s. He went on: "You will be interested to know that before the end of this year, we will be giving the first three Ph.D.'s in economics entirely made in Brazil." Then he described the three dissertation subjects. They were all on applied, practical, useful subjects for Brazilian development. He said: "Without the Alliance for Progress we never could have accomplished that." But the same kind of thing was reproduced in various fields, such as agricultural modernization, through special training institutions, the equivalent of our land grant colleges, the development of extension services, and things of that kind. These have left a permanent impact on institutional development. Then there was the creation of new financial institutions in 1964 and 1965, after the revolution, when Roberto Campos became the Planning Minister. He was very keen on institutions to provide access to credit for small business. He believed strongly in a highly decentralized working economy with a lot of initiative, a lot of entrepreneurship. Through the Alliance for Progress we helped a number of such credit institutions and they have had rather dramatic effects.

They played an important part in the so-called "Brazilian economic miracle" from 1968 to 1974, which was a period of high economic growth but also very severe political repression. That was the period when torture and disappearances, not on a major scale as in Argentina, but on a significant scale did take place and in my view was clearly too much. They were successful in suppressing the incipient stages of urban guerrilla movements, which they considered very dangerous, I'm sure, however, that they caught a lot of

Library of Congress

innocents along with the guilty. And the procedures were barbarous. In those same years, without any causal connection in my mind but by coincidence, Brazil experienced very dramatic economic growth. They were running over 10 percent a year for about 5 years on end, 1968 through 1973, a record matched by very few other countries. South Korea has had something like that, and maybe Singapore, but very few developing countries have ever had that kind of record. That couldn't have happened without the foundations laid by the Alliance for Progress.

I would like to believe, but I don't think that this is proved, that we left in many minds the notion that development with equity, with more equity, is possible and ought to be aimed for. That was a core idea of the Alliance.

If you look at the Brazilian experience over the last twenty years, what has happened is a vast amount of development, a considerable reduction of poverty, but a worsening income distribution and certainly lots of inequitable aspects. Nonetheless, the ideas of more equitable development didn't disappear. Increased social mobility through the expansion of education, particularly secondary education, is still the main theme. We pushed hard for that. We thought the Brazilian education establishment was very lopsided. They had free higher education and a theoretical constitutional requirement for four years (now it's six) of free primary education, but in fact, in the poorer parts of the country, a lot of kids either never saw a school at all or would attend for only one year or take the first year twice. But there was still a large amount of illiteracy. Then there are things that you can't measure. There would of course have been Brazilian efforts taking place without the Alliance, but the Alliance greatly helped. In the area of public health, for example, life expectancy increased by about ten years over the course of a decade. Infant mortality fell dramatically. Introducing clean drinking water up in the northeast, for example, helped tremendously. Here was a region which had had infant mortality of roughly 50 percent. Half of the kids born would die within the first year. Clean water would reduce that in one jump to maybe

Library of Congress

twenty percent. Twenty percent is still a terrible infant mortality figure, but compared with fifty percent, it's tremendous progress.

I dedicated a number of these projects myself when they were inaugurated and it's a very moving experience. You go to a place which previously had only well water. The women in the little communities would spend half of their days walking to the well, filling those huge pitchers, and carrying them on their heads. When a town water supply is inaugurated, even if they don't have taps in their own houses, there is one close by. They weep with joy at the running water. I was present at the switching on of the first electric lights in places that had not been electrified before. The experience was similar. Electricity makes all kinds of things possible.

Q: Do you feel that many of the seeds that you planted really took root? This was not a program that you mentioned in your letter — you certainly disagreed with the idea that the Alliance of Progress died on November 22, 1963. But was it really continuing through the Johnson administration?

GORDON: Oh yes...Johnson has been treated very unfairly by what I call the Camelot Mythmakers, for example, Arthur Schlesinger. He is a long-standing personal friend, but on this score the worship of the Kennedy clan has really destroyed his objectivity.

Q: Because of his reverence for Kennedy?

GORDON: Of course. But bad mouthing Johnson seems to me an unnecessary part of Kennedy worship. It really is quite unfair. When Johnson asked me to come back from Brazil to serve as Assistant Secretary, he asked about the Alliance for Progress. He told me he'd been very unhappy at learning how long the pipeline was when he took office. He gave me full support in carrying on the Alliance. He helped with the congressional appropriations on a couple of occasions when they were trembling on the balance and we needed a presidential push. Johnson had a personal interest in Latin America which went

Library of Congress

way back to his early days in Texas as a young man. That experience gave him this very warm attitude, which was not purely vote catching directed toward the Chicanos.

Q: Many of the things that you are talking about, such as lack of electric lights, clean water, and education, were things that actually he would probably have experienced. Certainly John Kennedy never did.

GORDON: That's right. Johnson had a feel, a kind of personal sympathy about these matters because he was much closer to the soil, so to speak, and to poverty than Kennedy.

Q: Did you have a feeling, coming from outside of the foreign service establishment, as a political appointee, but not from the politics side, rather from the expert side, being an economist, that knowing Rusk, having served in what I suppose you would call the Eastern Establishment, that you had much greater clout that could be used effectively as an ambassador than, say, a normal foreign service officer?

GORDON: You mean in Brazil?

Q: To perform your mission in Brazil.

GORDON: It's easier to answer that question about Washington than it is about Brazil. I have no doubt, and I think this was demonstrated, that in Washington more I had a greater delegation of authority than my counterpart Assistant Secretaries. And in Brazil as well, Washington looked to me more fully for advice on policy toward Brazil than would have been likely with a career diplomat. Obviously, an outstanding foreign service officer, if you had had the equivalent of a Chip Bohlen or a Tommy Thompson or a Dean Rusk for that matter, could have been equally effective, but with the general run of officers we had in the Latin American service, they would have been unlikely to have as strong an influence on Washington thinking about Brazil as I did. In Brazil itself, moreover, there were some things that I couldn't have done as a foreign service officer. I often took on the

Library of Congress

role of a university professor and economist. I would make speeches, for example, about Brazilian economic policy which would have been, in the mouth of a professional foreign service officer, considered very inappropriate, because they weren't particularly diplomatic. I was always polite about them, but they were dealing with matters that weren't strictly the business of the United States. And I would often be asked to give speeches at universities, sometimes at the beginning of the academic term and sometimes at the end. They were often to faculties and students of economics, and I would say, "Here I'm speaking not as an American ambassador but as a former professor at Harvard, greatly interested in Brazilian development. Before I had any notion of becoming an ambassador here I was working on a research project on Brazilian development, and here are some of my ideas. Take them or leave them." It gave me a kind of freedom to address in public topics which were useful from the US government's point of view, but would have been embarrassing or impossible if I had not had a professional academic background.

Q: I know this was true. Richard Gardner, when I was in Italy, could do the same thing. He could put on his Columbia law hat, an economic law hat, and talk in those terms at universities, that just a normal foreign service officer couldn't have done.

GORDON: I think the Brazilians assumed when I came that I was closer to Kennedy in person than I really was. I came to be fairly close to him in person because he had this intense interest in Brazil. Every time I was back on consultations, he wanted to hear from me in person. At the time of the Goulart visit of state in April 1962 we were in more or less continuous communication for several days. He had asked me up a week in advance to help prepare him for the visit. And as the mini-crisis developed in Brazil in the summer of '62, the Kennedy return visit was called off. Instead we worked up the idea of a visit by Bobby Kennedy, which took place in December of '62. I don't know whether that had a useful effect or not.

Q: Sometimes expectations get too high, don't they . . . when somebody comes, when we're in a position to give something and they're not after advice . . .

Library of Congress

GORDON: They're usually after something substantive. The Bobby Kennedy visit was unexpected on their part. It was at our initiative. We pretended that Bobby was going to be somewhere in Puerto Rico or the Virgin islands anyway, and that because of congestion of congressional business at home, the President could not come. Wouldn't it be nice if Bobby could come instead, and talk to Goulart on his brother's behalf? Goulart, I think, realized that it was a pretense when I told him this. He at once said, "Of course. I'd love to receive him here." In that case they weren't asking anything from him; they were curious as to what message he had to convey. He came back later, after the military takeover, in the fall of 1965 on his own personal campaign business. That was different. I'm not sure what he was campaigning for at that moment.

Q: The Senate seat from in New York, I guess.

GORDON: No, he'd just been reelected Senator in '64. In the interview he had with President Castelo Branco, Castelo asked him what the object of the voyage was. Afterwards Bobby Kennedy seemed amazed at the question. He kept saying to me as we drove away in the car, "Why did the President ask me that question? What was in his mind about that?" Bobby Kennedy handled himself very badly on that trip. Now you want to talk a little bit about the military period?

Q: I think we ought to talk a little about the military.

GORDON: I've just given you a twenty-page, double-spaced memorandum I wrote in 1971 or '72 about my personal relationships with Castelo Branco, the first military president. He was the only one who was president while I was Ambassador. That memorandum should cover a great deal of the territory. I believe you're going to keep that on file with this interview.

Q: Yes, I'm going to keep that on file with this interview.

Library of Congress

During the previous period of the gradual and then quickening move of Goulart towards the left, were you acting under any particular instructions from Washington? What sort of orders were you giving and what sort of orders were you receiving at this time?

GORDON: I got very little in the way of particular instructions on anything from Washington in that whole four and a half years, other than on certain very specific negotiations. When the Cuban missile base crisis arose, I got a specific instruction to try to see the president between two and four hours before Kennedy's speech was delivered on that Monday night, to read him (in Portuguese) an advance text of the speech, and ask for his votes in the UN and the OAS. The next day, that was a very specific instruction. There were occasionally very clear negotiating instructions on a variety of formal agreements including a protocol to our extradition treaty. But with respect to our general posture toward Brazil, we were reporting constantly. I was recommending policy positions, and generally speaking they were endorsed. I'm sure that if you had the whole file now of telegram exchanges, you'd find many examples of Washington saying, "That's fine, go ahead."

Let me give you a couple of examples where I acted first and then got confirmation later. This is probably contrary to the way a professional diplomat would have done, and maybe unwise, though I don't regret either of these. One was in November 1965. An election had been scheduled for October, under the old constitution, involving half the state governors. In spite of the military takeover of power, the government went through with that election on schedule. In two very important states, candidates sympathetic to Kubitschek were elected. One was in Guanabara, the old federal district which was the city of Rio and its suburbs. The other was in Minas Gerais, an important centrally located state. The election results created quite a furor. The harder right wing within the military — the so-called "linha dura" or hard line — was very unhappy about it. They didn't want to let those governors-elect be inaugurated, and they put Castelo Branco under tremendous pressure. He finally agreed to sign a Second Institutional Act, which extended his arbitrary powers to deprive people of their political rights for ten years. Those powers had been created under

Library of Congress

the Institutional Act of April that had expired. That phase was supposed to be over. The Second Institutional Act revived those powers; it also dissolved the old political parties, enlarged the Supreme Court, and made other drastic political changes. It was obvious that Castelo had been very unhappy about signing this piece of paper. When he announced his acceptance of it, he also made clear that he was going to use any additional powers that he had to make sure that these two governors would, in fact, get inaugurated. And they were, on the scheduled date. Kubitschek rather foolishly came back from Paris in a wave of euphoria after this election. He was greeted by hundreds of thousands of his friends at the airport in Rio. There was a big parade for him, and this got the hard liners worried. They were afraid that there might be new kinds of protest demonstrations against their regime. The people at the top of the government, including Castelo Branco himself, and his then foreign minister, Juracy Magalhaes, were aware that I had been extremely unhappy about the First Institutional Act back in April. I had seriously considered resigning from the job because it was so contrary to all of my notions about what constitutional government ought to be about. During the middle of the March 31 - April 1 crisis that actually resulted in Goulart leaving and the military taking over, I tried to use my influence to strengthen the spine of the Congress through Kubitschek, the ex-president who was the most popular man in the country. He was a Senator then. All without instructions — I was acting on my own — I went to him on the night of March 31st and tried all get him to strengthen the role of Congress on what was to happen if Goulart departed, including the way a new president would be elected. The acting president would be the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. Nobody thought of him as a long term president, and the Constitution itself, the 46th Constitution, provided that he would be interim-president only for thirty days. During this time, if it were the first half of the term, there would be a new popular election. If it were the second half of the term, the president for the remainder of that term would be elected by the Congress in joint session. Nominally, they in fact went through that process, electing Castelo Branco without much dissent. I think there were a few negative votes but not many. That was later, on April 11, but it followed the Institutional Act decreed on April 9 by the military. That was a very arbitrary, really fascist

Library of Congress

document, which said in effect that the revolution makes its own law — if we maintain any parts of the 1946 constitution that is because we want to maintain it, not because we are bound by it. The Act was signed by the three military ministers. In fact, a sort of junta had declared itself entitled to exercise a revolutionary constituent power.

I thought that was a pretty lousy doctrine, since the Brazilian Constitution had said, more or less in the spirit of ours, that it is “all power emanates from the people.” My intellectual formation was very strongly in line with the eighteenth century Lockean political philosophy which underlies our own constitution. So the Institutional Act came as a very shocking document to me.

In 1976, on a return visit to San Paulo, I was asked in a press interview what my expectations had been at the time of the revolution about the political future of Brazil and how they corresponded with reality. I gave an honest answer. I said that I had been well aware that during the previous six or eight months prior to the revolution there had been growing chaos: political, economic, and social. When Goulart was thrown out, and the military took over, I thought there would be a period of exceptional rule for a number of months. I expected a good deal of purging of people who were considered subversive in various institutions. But I thought that at the latest by the time of the next scheduled presidential election, which was to be in October 1965, the military would, in keeping with the old Brazilian tradition, get out of political office, go back to the barracks, and turn the government back to civilians. Speaking in 1976, I went on to say that obviously did not happen. The headline in *O Estado de Sao Paulo* the next day surprised me, because it wasn't true. It read: “Gordon condemns revolution.” In fact, I hadn't condemned the revolution; all I did was to contrast what I thought was going to happen to what actually happened.

That example shows, incidentally, some weaknesses in my judgment about the Brazilian scene. However, I did retain confidence that democracy would ultimately be restored. In the 1966 Senate hearings when I was nominated to be Assistant Secretary, I said

Library of Congress

that the democratic ethos was sufficiently well developed in Brazil that after an interim period they would return to constitutional institutions. In that respect, I was right although it took a lot longer than I expected. But it's very interesting that at no time during these entire 21 years of military rule did any of those military presidents — they were all Army generals — argue for permanent military rule. None of them ever acted like Pinochet in Chile. There was never a serious attempt to get renewed in office or to become president for life. And no notion of a permanent military dictatorship. Indeed, when they dissolved the old set of political parties, they didn't do what a truly fascist group (or, for that matter, a communist group) would have done; that is, set up a single party. They said there should be two parties. In effect: "We don't want a Mexican solution, because Mexico is not a true democracy. We can't have a true democracy we have only a single party. And therefore, even though we are going on for a while with these exceptional powers, we want to conserve the basis of a democratic system." That is an interesting aspect of Brazilian society.

Q: You were speaking of actions that you took on your own initiative.

GORDON: Kubitschek's return in October 1965 was one of the events that led to the Second Institutional Act. I was in Washington at the time. On getting back to Rio, I found an urgent message from Foreign Minister Juracy Magalhaes, asking that I call on him at home that very evening. He knew how much I disliked the Institutional Acts, and he was probably worried, not only about my possibly resigning, which, of course, wouldn't have been a fate worse than death, but also my possibly recommending that economic aid be cut off. Brazil at that moment needed financial help from the United States quite badly. He explained to me in some detail the circumstances. He himself was an ex-Army officer long since out of the service. He knew the generals — their names and numbers — very well. He was himself a distinguished figure in Brazilian history. He had played an important part in 1945 in getting Vargas thrown out as dictator, and he had firm constitutional principles. He had been governor of the state of Bahia. I had called on him as a Ford Foundation consultant back in 1959, when we were his guests for dinner in the governor's mansion.

Library of Congress

We had maintained a very cordial acquaintance after that. Later he was ambassador here, too.

He explained what lay behind the Second Institutional Act and I commented that I was glad to know the background. He described in detail who the hard-liners were and how they practically forced Castelo Branco to sign the document. He described what lay behind it, but he also emphasized that Castelo was going to use these powers to get those two governors inaugurated. Therefore, he went on, he hoped that the US government wouldn't take too dim a view of it.

I made an appointment as soon as I could to call on Castelo Branco, whom by then I had seen a fair number of times. Without instructions, I scratched out some talking notes in the office before going to the palace. It was a polite but extremely vigorous statement of my concerns about the Institutional Acts. I said to Castelo Branco that it had been bad enough to have one. After a revolution, one can understand one such measure, and had been called THE Institution Act. But if you go on to have a second, that implies the possibility of a third, a fourth, a fifth... who knows? That practice puts an end to the rule of law. He was very responsive. He didn't like having signed the document but he felt he had no choice. What I said to him really came from the heart as far as I was concerned, and it was not a very pleasant interview from his point of view. I then went back to the office and wrote a full, detailed reporting telegram. The next day, I got back a message saying: "Bravo! You did exactly right." I don't think that a professional foreign service officer would have acted that way.

Q: I think you are right, except perhaps in very exceptional circumstances. Normally we're trained to check before doing something like this, no matter what you believe.

GORDON: You draft it first and send it to Washington and say, "Is this okay? This is what I would like to say to the President." Looking back on it, it wasn't all that urgent, and probably I would have been wiser to clear it in advance. That's one decision when I acted

Library of Congress

on my own. The other unusual one had to do with military assistance. We were getting requests separately from the Army, Navy and Air Force, each of them submitting lists of desired items. We were running into financial restraints because Congress was pressing to limit military aid to Latin America. The Administration by then was so interested in Vietnam that they were prepared to sacrifice these smaller regions to the cause. I was rather unhappy about it, especially when I became Assistant Secretary, because in Peru our predictions came true: namely that the Peruvians, when refused jet aircraft from the United States, bought them from France. Then later they started having military relationships with the Soviet Union. It wouldn't have cost us very much to have warded that off.

In the Brazilian context, while still Ambassador, I thought something had to be done to rationalize all of this, so, I worked up a memorandum on planning for military modernization and procurement. It said that we were entering a period of constraints on the funds available for weapons modernization; therefore priorities were very important; and we were baffled by getting separate requests from the three services, which added up to more than we could supply. We didn't want to be responsible for setting Brazilian priorities. I knew there didn't exist at that time an institutional mechanism for setting priorities. I went on to say that we had lots of experience in the Pentagon with this kind of problem, with which I was familiar as a War Production Board alumnus. Some of my thinking was based on the work we had done on priorities during the War itself.

It would be a great help to us as their military providers if they could have a more rational program. I suggested some possible guidelines and said that if they wanted technical assistance in setting up the program, I was confident that I could get appropriate people from our Budget Bureau or Defense Department to provide it. I took the memo to President Castelo Branco. He read it with interest, and he gave it to General Geisel, who later became President also but was then head of the "military household" in the presidency. I brought along the chief of our MAAG for a long talk with Geisel. Then I sent a detailed reporting telegram, along with the text of the memorandum. As you can imagine, McNamara was overjoyed by this. He sent a cordial and enthusiastic endorsement. But

Library of Congress

again, it was a case where I acted first and got the approval later. In hindsight, I think in both these cases time wasn't all that urgent, and it might have been better to get approval from Washington first. I don't think it would have changed anything. It reflects the degree of confidence I had that I understood generally what was going on in Washington's mind. I felt sure I would be backed and in fact always was. That was partly due to my frequent consultations in Washington.

Q: You said you went back and forth approximately every three months.

GORDON: That's right. When I was here I saw all the key players, because I had the advantage of personal acquaintance with all the cabinet-level people. I had worked with Dillon in these early days of the Alliance for Progress. After he left the Treasury, his successor was H. H. Fowler, who for some reason or other has the nickname "Joe". He had been on the legal staff of the War Production Board when I was Deputy Program Vice-Chairman and later Program Vice-Chairman. We became quite good friends and are still close colleagues on the Atlantic Council of the United States. As a result, first as an ambassador and then later as Assistant Secretary I had no hesitation in going directly to the Secretary of the Treasury. Those were advantages not so much of being a political appointee as having a particular set of personal acquaintanceships.

Q: And a normal foreign service officer would not have been able to make these acquaintances.

GORDON: That's probably right.

Q: Just two more questions. What would you say was your greatest achievement that you felt being ambassador.

GORDON: That's hard. I can describe my greatest disappointment more easily. I was disappointed at the fact that the Alliance for Progress did not become a main objective for the Brazilian government. What became Goulart's main purpose was trying to get much

Library of Congress

wider powers. You describe Goulart as moving to the left, but the left to right scale is not exactly correct. I was convinced that Goulart was not a communist, and said this often in telegrams. He struck me essentially as being like a Tammany Hall boss, a seeker after power. He had two heroes, one being Getulio Vargas, who had been his political mentor, and the other Juan Peron in Argentina. I am morally certain that what he wanted to do and in fact was manipulating things to do, was to become a populist dictator in the mold of those two. I mean the mold of Vargas in his pre-war dictatorial period, pre-war, not his presidential period.

Goulart and I saw each other quite often. I saw him more than I ever saw Castelo Branco, contrary to the usual mythology about my role in Brazil. Goulart talked candidly about many matters. Then I cultivated people in his palace guard. Some of them, probably because they were uncertain about his intentions and what was going to happen thought it useful to drop an anchor to windward, by knowing the American ambassador and having lunch with me. I did a lot of business with these people in one-on-one lunches at the Embassy residence. We had a marvelous chef, and it was a very agreeable surrounding. Brazilians tend to be talkative, and their tongues loosen quite easily, so they revealed a good deal about Goulart's intentions and frame of mind. So I had a number of confidants, in effect, in the palace guard, some of them full-time officials, and others Goulart's cronies in private life — a sort of kitchen cabinet. There was a fellow who worked for the German seamless steel tubing company, Mannesman, which had a big factory in Brazil, who was a kind of private economic adviser to Goulart. He and I worked together in trying to avoid a moratorium on Brazil's foreign indebtedness.

Brazil had to restore diplomatic relations with France, which had been cut because of a "lobster war". De Gaulle had sent ships into Brazilian lobster areas north of the hump and Goulart had become furious. I happened to be in the palace one night when Goulart was talking to his foreign minister denouncing De Gaulle in wild language. Then, the next day, they cut diplomatic relations. But they couldn't renegotiate their debt without the help of the Paris Club of creditor governments, and the Paris Club was chaired by a Frenchman. So

Library of Congress

they had to restore diplomatic relations with France. This personal adviser to Goulart came over to the Embassy and we worked out together the documents which made it possible for Brazil to resume relations with France, and then appeal to the Paris Club for help in rescheduling the debts.

We also worked out together the text of a letter from Goulart to Lyndon Johnson. Goulart had had some correspondence with Kennedy, and after the period of mourning for Kennedy, he wanted to start a personal correspondence with Johnson. What should he say? At that time, he was tacking toward the left internally in Brazil. That was not, in my view, because he was a real reformer who wanted to bring about left-wing goals, whatever they might be. He talked in terms of socialist goals, much greater equality and basic reforms, but I don't think for a moment that he believed in the substance of basic reforms. What he believed in then was the motto of basic reforms, the slogan of basic reforms, as a way of advancing his claim to power.

To come back to the point, I was disappointed because I had hoped, starting with this great interest in the Alliance for Progress, that I would spend two years helping to put the Alliance into operation. At the end of those two years I would go back to Harvard, and great new enterprise would have been launched in Brazil. Instead of that, after two years, the country was in terrible economic condition, inflation was rising, growth was almost totally stagnating; there was political turmoil. There was great uncertainty towards the fall of 1963 as to what the future was going to bring. Then my own president was shot in November, and those months between Kennedy's death and the military takeover in Brazil were a very gloomy period.

I'm not a religious man, but our embassy was located just under the shadow of the Corcovado, which has on top the monumental statue of Christ. It is floodlit at night, and seen at that distance it is a very moving statue. It is called Cristo Redentor, Christ the Redeemer. There's an old slogan in Brazil that God is a Brazilian and was born in Bahia, and the slogan is used in the same way as Mark Twain's remark that God takes care of

Library of Congress

drunks, fools, and the United States of America. Somehow or other, whatever crises Brazil may go through God will provide. Some of those nights in late 1963 and early 1964, after dinner, I would look up at the statue from the terrace of our embassy residence and ask myself, "I wonder whether God really is a Brazilian. Is the country going to survive this time?"

So from my point of view, things really were getting worse and worse in those months. And the dramatic events at the end of March were really nerve-wracking. There was the possibility of a genuine civil war. This is why I developed the proposal for a contingency naval force, which was called "Operation Brother Sam". The people who think that I helped to plan the military conspiracy always point to this naval force. I find that insulting. If it all had been according to my plan, at least I would have had the naval task force handy by the time the Brazilian troops began to move, but it wasn't anywhere near; it was way up off the northern coast of South America. The whole revolution was over in forty-eight hours. I advised Washington and CINCSOUTH to call the task force off and turn it back, except for three tankers loaded with petroleum in them which I suggested be kept coming at least until we could see if they were needed. The Petrobras trade union leadership was very radical and there was some concern about sabotage at the refineries. As it turned out, there was no problem of that kind. The top officials of Petrobras were changed right away, and I went around to see the new ones. I told them we had three tankers on the way and asked whether they had any use for them. They said no. They were satisfied that everything was under control. So I had the tankers turned around too. When the telegrams were declassified and published, the Brazilian journalists thought POL meant something political. They were quite amazed. There was a long story years later in the *Jornal do Brasil* about this. The telegram said, "Turn the task force around, except for the POL which should be kept going until Ambassador Gordon advises that it is not needed." This was thought to be some deep political conspiracy, and there were many readers eager to believe in conspiracy.

Library of Congress

So I was disappointed that instead of a couple of years of essentially constructive activity like the Marshall Plan, we had economic stagnation and political crisis and then the military takeover. I was happy about the military takeover because the alternatives seemed to me to me so lousy, but I was not at all happy with the principle of a military takeover. I believe in constitutional democracy as a superior form of government. But I was deeply concerned about the way things were moving. I did not believe that Goulart was a communist, but I was convinced that he was a very weak president. Unlike Vargas or Peron, he would not be an effective dictator. He might turn out to be the Naguib who would be followed by some solidly left-wing Nasser. I never identified a particular person for that role, but I know there were a number of individuals who saw themselves in it.

Q: Nobody knew where Nasser was until Nasser appeared on the scene.

GORDON: Exactly. That works on the right wing too. Nobody ever heard of Pinochet before he turned up in Chile, and after all Sadat was not much of a known character.

Q: The same was true of Nasser.

GORDON: Exactly. The ultimate successor to power turned out to be an entirely different character. That was a real concern of mine regarding Goulart. I reported that in a number of telegrams as a serious danger. For those reasons, I probably made a mistake in being as overtly welcoming to the military takeover as I was.

Q: You didn't give the cool hand to the military. What was the phrase?

GORDON: Milton Eisenhower's advice. No, I didn't give the cool hand for two reasons. As I already mentioned I thought seriously about resigning over the Institutional Act of April 9. But on April 2, the telegram that I advised Lyndon Johnson to send — and a lot of people forget this too — it was not addressed to Castelo Branco. It was sent to Ranieri Mazzilli, the Acting President, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. I wanted to confirm the role of Congress as the symbol of constitutional legitimacy. I even had a word in my draft that

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George Ball took out, "Congratulate Mazzilli on his accession as a constitutional president of Brazil." From the legal point of view I wanted to maintain the notion of continuity, that this was not really a new regime that required a new act of recognition. There was some basis for that position. When Goulart went into hiding on the second day of the revolution, the Congress, led by the President of the Senate, held a joint session and they voted to declare the presidency vacant. There was no constitution provision for that, but still, it was an act by the properly elected Congress which was the closest thing to a constitutional body. The leaders had walked over to the Supreme Court with Mazzilli and had the Chief Justice swear him into the presidency. So there was a kind of semblance of legality and continuity of the constitution that was maintained for the next eight days, until April 9. It was in that period that I welcomed the takeover of power and advised that a congratulatory telegram be sent to Mazzilli.

I had some dealings with Mazzilli as president concerning emergency economic aid. They needed it desperately, because they were terribly worried about inflation and they needed emergency supplies to keep food prices down. On April 2 or 3, I was awakened early in the morning by the Acting Finance Minister and requested to stay at home until they could pick me up and take me to the presidential palace for a session with Mazzilli. He himself was a puppet, simply reading what these ministers had written for him. But they were serious men, some of them left over from Goulart's cabinet. This is one of the odd things. Goulart, even at the very end, still had a mixture in his cabinet. Certain members of cabinet skipped out of the country right away. They were very scared about what the military might do to them. Some went into voluntary exile; some just went into hiding, some resigned and didn't go into hiding, others stayed in office for a while at least to carry out the necessary transition.

When Castelo Branco did come in after April 11, the quality of his appointments was very high. His first foreign minister was the senior professional diplomat in Brazil, Vasco Leitao da Cunha, universally respected. He had been a political adviser in North Africa during the war, in the African campaign. He had been Ambassador to Moscow after they

Library of Congress

renewed relationships in 1961, and also Ambassador to Cuba. Shortly after I arrived in Brazil in the fall of 1961, Foreign Minister San Tiago Dantas announced in the Chamber of Deputies that Brazil was going to recognize the Soviet Union again. I was asked by the press to comment on that. I said: "The United States recognizes the Soviet Union; I don't see why this should be a subject for me to comment on. It's for Brazil to make up its own mind." Some conservatives in Brazil regarded that move as very dangerous. Some half celebrated our Thanksgiving day, and considered it particularly inappropriate on a day dedicated to thanks to God to be recognizing this atheistic society.

The impression I had was that Castelo Branco wanted to restore democratic government within a quite short period of time. I intend to check this impression against the semi-official biography of his regime by Luiz Viana, and also the book about Castelo by Jack Dulles, who teaches out at the University of Texas. My conviction at the time was that Castelo first became a conspirator only because he was convinced that Goulart was trying to violate the constitution himself. He seemed to be a genuine believer in constitutional integrity, as he said in the famous memorandum of March 1964 sent to the officer corps. Left to his own devices, I thought that he would try to restore civilian rule pretty rapidly, presumably improving on the 1946 constitution which had a lot of defects. If not in 1965, I thought by 1966 and certainly by 1970. His successor, Costa e Silva, was much more of the hard line type and less of an intellectual. He was a kind of "barracks general", as they called him. He was much cruder and less sensitive to the possible consequences of a prolonged period of military rule. He favored action, without worrying too much about legal niceties. But Castelo Branco was a very cultivated man. I think he had the wish to see civilian government restored, a wish not fulfilled during his lifetime or for a long time afterwards.

Now, coming back to the question of achievements during my tenure, I suppose the greatest single achievement was in the substantial positive results from a lot of these aspects of the Alliance for Progress we have already covered. There was another one in the months before the revolution, the military takeover, that I am quite proud of and was

Library of Congress

essentially my own contribution. That was to deflect the internal turmoil in Brazil away from anti-Americanism. There was, for example, a big push from the left for repudiating the debt. I managed to deflect that into opening up the channels for renegotiation instead. That took a lot of doing in Washington, in Paris, working in Rio with the man in the palace to re-open relations with France. I came up here to the annual meeting of the Governors of the World Bank and IMF to attend a special meeting of Brazil's creditors from different countries. I gave them a strong argument for being receptive to the idea of renegotiating with Brazil. That was all before the revolution.

There were other smaller accomplishments. There was a widely accepted theory in Brazil that the terms of trade were being deliberately turned by the United States against an already impoverished Brazil. I had been asked to give a speech to their National Economic Council, which is not a very powerful body, but fairly dignified. So I chose that theme and wrote a long article on the subject, which was later published in English in the Department of State Bulletin. It took a lot of research. It was entirely based on Brazilian data. It showed that the arguments being tossed around always took as a base year, I think it was when there had been a severe frost in the coffee area of Brazil. The price of coffee had shot way up, to over a dollar a pound, which in those days was considered astronomical. The normal price was around 20 cents a pound. That year had been taken as the base year for measuring changes in the Brazilian terms of trade. I went back to around 1900, as far back as the Brazilian figures would permit. The article had a chart showing the sharp peak, which I said was like Mount Fujiyama, in the year of the frost. Over a longer period, the terms of trade improved from time to time as much as they worsened. I put in some pretty strong language about careless politicians trying to make this into an international political issue and got some good publicity for the speech. It was published in full in the serious newspapers in Brasilia, Rio, and Sao Paulo. The cliches about the terms of trade as anti-American slogans pretty much disappeared from the vocabulary.

There were some other accomplishments. Brizola, Goulart's brother-in-law, was always a trouble maker. He had the Peace Corps thrown out of his state, Rio Grande do Sul.

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He accused them of being spies or CIA agents, which was totally untrue, and called on Brazilians to treat them like enemies. I took this issue to Goulart, and was very serious about it. I said: "If any of these youngsters gets attacked physically, you know, your brother-in-law will have been responsible. He took steps to calm this down, and to provide some special security protection for the Peace Corps volunteers.

So many of the accomplishments were fending off trouble, particularly during the nine months before the revolution. You have read my testimony in 1966 in which I classified the Goulart era into four phases, two up phases and two down phases. During that last down phase which started roughly in July of 1963 and lasted until Goulart was thrown out, things were getting worse and from month to month. There was very little redeeming social value. And during that period every time some theme would emerge in the public debate that had a strong anti-American twist to it, I took some kind of action to deflect it.

Q: It sounds as if you were able to use your academic credentials to reach beyond the normal audience. Any ambassador can make statements, but if you can also speak with professional authority, particularly if many of the arguments are economic — which in Brazil I imagine they would be — that carries more weight.

We are just about out of tape, I'm afraid. At some point I might want to come back. I want to thank you very much. After what you said I will not call you Mr. Ambassador, although it's part of my training. But thank you very much.

End of interview